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**A FOOT IN TWO WORLDS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF THE
EXPERIENCES OF WORKING CLASS WOMEN MANAGERS**

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study used narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of nine working class women managers. Using a critical feminist lens, the influence and effect of the dominant culture and class expectations placed upon them as a result of their gender, class and position within the organization were explored through the stories the women told about their lives. The narratives, co-constructed by the women and the researcher, were not only analyzed for commonalities and differences, they were also reviewed to expose the effect of power relationships on the women's lives and learning.

The analysis suggests that hegemony and power have played a role not only in their working class backgrounds, but also in their experiences as managers and their interpretations of those experiences. Implications for adult education and human resource development practice are presented, and suggestions for related future research are offered.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At the time I was growing up in the suburbs of Allentown, PA, I didn't realize that I was working class. I grew up with a sense of pride in who I was, raised to believe I would work hard in and outside of the home. My family encouraged questioning of authority, yet did not encourage me to be too critical of traditional "American values." We were fiercely independent – making our own way, refusing to ask for help, and often disdainful of those who did. We were also fierce in our love and support of each other, even when mishaps, major errors in judgment and even slight altercations with the law occurred.

Members of my extended family including my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and my own mother worked at jobs in factories or in service jobs such as retail or restaurant wait staff. I became familiar with words such as union man, foreman, union steward, grievances, seniority, bumping and layoff – often preceded by colorful adjectives. Those members of my family who did not work in working class positions, were nurses or teachers – positions that were okay for women if they were fortunate enough to have worked their way through a local college or nursing school.

It wasn't until I was in a sociology class as a senior at Penn State that I realized that I was working class, however at the time it meant nothing to me. I graduated and worked as a social worker, and promptly organized the office under the auspices of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union.

When I became first a front line supervisor, and then a manager, however my thinking slowly changed away from a focus on the inevitability of the marginalization of employees and the senselessness of those in a supervisor or management position in the workplace. Instead, I

began to lean toward the values of education, freedom to make one's own decisions, the importance of the team and the company, preparing for the future and maintaining a business' economic health. This did not occur as a result of my education, or as an epiphany of any given event. Rather, this change in my thinking came about gradually, as I learned to become a supervisor and eventually a manager. My love for my family did not change, but their perceptions of me as a working woman did change – as well as their comments regarding the kind of work I performed. Comments such as “what do you know, you're a manager” and “that sounds like something a manager would say”, while rare, have not ceased to sting. As a result, there has been a disconnect at times with my family of origin because of this shift in my thinking and a resulting ambivalence of my own identities as a woman from a working class background, as well as a woman who is a manager.

How did I, a woman from a working class background learn to become a manager? What were the experiences, the events, the relationships, the written or unwritten expectations that impacted me and challenged my values? Is my experience unique, or have other women who have gone from a similar background to a manager position experienced similar value shifts? And have they, like me, experienced a dissonance with their family of origin as a result? These are the questions that led me to pursue this research.

Background to the Problem

People in the US have a tendency to define themselves as middle class – irrespective of where their economic and social reality places them. We want to, believe that we are a society without a social class system. In our country, there are stigmas placed upon those in “lower classes” and an arrogance placed upon those in the “upper class”. It is part of our heritage that anyone can make it, regardless of background. In the long run, denial of one's class position can

result in a confused or even contradictory class identity – perhaps even leaving working class people anxious about who they are and what they are becoming (Rubin, 1994).

Our access to resources and power is a function of two things: our relationship to the material world – that is how much money we have, the jobs we hold, as well as how much education we have – and our relationship to the social world, that is who we know, and their access to resources and power. Our relationships to the material and social world, in turn, are reflected in our values and daily experiences. (Marshall, 1991, pp.1-2)

Our relationships to the material and social world are reflective of and reflected by our values and daily experiences – influenced by our socioeconomic class. Although family income and the type of job a person performs are often considered as elements of a person's social class, membership in a socio-economic class often carries with it ways of thinking regarding such things as: the importance or unimportance of education and the worth of members of that class as compared to others that society may deem as successful. Additionally, there may be class related expectations revolving around the expected, gendered roles and familial ties as communicated through the power and authority of the family and culture.

In this dissertation, I focused on women who came from a working class background. Therefore, in addition to the ideas of class raised earlier, within the working class culture, there is an understanding of the need to acquiesce and fight against forces of oppression at the same time – forces of oppression such as bosses or managers or teachers (voices of authority). Working class is a location on the structured hierarchy of power within a patriarchal and capitalist culture. It often involves acknowledging one's place, trying to fit into one's expected roles, and becoming successful as defined by the dominant culture and the working class culture itself, within the limits established by those forces of power (Foley, 2005; Griffith, 2003;

Holladay, 2003; hooks, 2000; Luttrell, 1997; Maneval, 2000; Marshall, 1991; McRobbie, 1978; Rubin, 1994).

Inequalities between classes exist in our society and are handed down through family life – through parent/child interactions and modeling. Economic, political, societal, educational and cultural systems all play a role in the perpetuation of our class based social structures. These societal systems encourage hegemonic thoughts and perpetuate feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt and impostership. These feelings and emotions can affect women from working class backgrounds in a variety of ways.

Working Class

Class is more than our relationship to production in the capitalistic sense, and more than our income or education (Weber, 1968). Our social class involves our behavior and basic assumptions, how we are taught to behave, our expectations of ourselves and others, how we think of the future, even how we understand and solve problems (hooks, 2000). “Everything we believe and everything we do is influenced by our place in an economic and social order” (Nesbit, 2006, p. 172).

A problem with defining working class in terms of labor is the changing American economy from one of production to one of service. In an economy that is increasingly relying on the knowledge and intellect of its workers, as opposed to their manual labor, even persons in what may be called “white collar” positions may be considered working class (McCarriston, 1995). It is not feasible for one’s occupation alone to determine one’s socioeconomic class.

Class is less about possessions and more about a way of looking at the world; less about lifestyle and more about power and privilege. Regardless of lifestyle, possessions, or income, those in the working class are not the owners or leaders of businesses, they are the workers.

Working class is indeed a location on the structured hierarchy of power within a patriarchal and capitalist culture. Ties to the working class culture, values and beliefs are strong and in many cases positive, self-fulfilling and affirming (Luttrell, 1997; Maneval, 2000; Marshall, 1991; Rubin, 1994).

Some frequently discussed characteristics of working class people include: common sense as opposed to formal education or knowledge gained from books (Johnson, 2002; Luttrell, 1987; Willis, 1977); a focus on what one can produce with one's hands as opposed to thinking or intelligence (Frye, Curran, Pierce, Young & Ziegler, 2005; Luttrell, 1987); a reliance on the group, especially other working class women (Fox, 2004; Rubin, 1976, 1994; Yodanis, 2002); the expectation one will stay within one's class and community (Westwood, 1986; Willis, 1977); and education as a means to an end, not for its own sake (Lucey, et al., 2003; Luttrell, 1997).

These characteristics frequently associated with people of working class backgrounds are borne out in the literature relating specifically to women from a working class background. I turn now to a brief summary of that literature.

Working Class Women

In reviewing literature relating to identity development in working class women, four major themes emerge. The first one is the importance of the family. A recurring sub-theme is that of being "good" as defined by the family: meaning having well behaved and respectable children is important in order to be seen as a successful parent (Edwards, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1994). A related sub-theme in working class women's identity development is the importance of the role of the mother or mother figure in the family structure (Edwards, 2004; hooks, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Rubin, 1994). The mother and child relationship is often

placed above relationships with other adults, including the father (Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1976).

A second theme in the literature relating to working class women's identity development is the role of the community: the community in which a person lives reinforces social class; socially acceptable behavior differences are reinforced or disdained (Rubin, 1976, 1994; Yodanis, 2002). A third theme is the working class girl's experience in the school system: American educational systems claim to pave the path for anyone who is educated and does well in school to achieve "The American Dream," the reality is that the schools actually serve to reinforce existing divisions and in many ways, perpetuate the hegemony of the dominant culture (Ali, 2003; Lucey, et al., 2003; Luttrell, 1997). And finally, the fourth theme relating to working class women's identity development is that of their job experience: dominant culture has historically viewed the job patterns of working class women as inconsistent – in the sense that the jobs they hold are often not progressive in terms of income, responsibility or status (Dabrowski, 1983).

Working class women in the workforce.

Women make up more and more of this country's workforce, and indeed the global workforce each year. They represent 60% of the world's "working poor." Such a dramatic growth in the numbers of women in the workforce has not led to socio-economic empowerment for women. True equality of men and women in the workforce remains out of reach (International Labour Office, 2004). Even in the early years of the 21st century, "the labor force...continues to be highly segregated by gender, with most women workers concentrated in traditionally female occupations" (Hayes and Flannery, 2000, p. 34). More women than men work in part time positions and more often women have the major share of other responsibilities

(home, immediate family, extended family, etc). Issues in the workplace that might affect women's job performance include concerns such as sexual harassment, discrimination (gender based or other), work-life balance, and lack of power. Although not exclusive to working class women, their vulnerability to these issues can be seen in the workplace (Bratton, 2001; Brine & Waller, 2004; Howell, Carter & Schied, 2002; Munro, 2001; Westwood, 1984).

Many women of working class origin work outside of the home – often in the lowest levels of an organization. These women are faced with a “class ceiling.” In addition to a glass ceiling that many women face preventing them from moving up in the organization, a class ceiling presents additional barriers (Brine & Waller, 2004).

Working class women often work in manufacturing or the service sector where employees are under the rules of a labor contract. In such settings, the politics involved in the organization or the informal organizational culture set by the employees can impede learning – or control what is actually learned, and thus done (Bratton, 2001; Westwood, 1984). All of these aspects of power on the part of the union have a significant impact on working class women. “In the subtle realignment between interests of class, gender and race, the voices of many working class women ... remain unheard” (Munro, 2001, p. 470).

Women, especially working class women, are subject to strong elements of control by their supervisors. They are told what to do, and are given little opportunity for input into how to do it. They are often subject to the whims of their personal relationships with their bosses. They feel expendable (Howell, Carter, & Schied, 2002; Johnson, 2002). In some settings, this feeling of vulnerability may lead the women to develop their own community in the workplace to compensate for the feelings of powerlessness (Westwood, 1984).

Issues of power and powerlessness, work-life balance and discrimination are not limited to working class women. Women in management positions also struggle with these concerns.

Women in management

Women managers have many of the same problems as women in the workforce who are not managers – issues such as work-life balance, job related stress and discrimination. However, women managers are a discrete group and as such have experiences that are specific to their managerial role (Fagenson, 1993).

Although many working women have problems balancing their jobs with the demands of their families, women managers have the added stress that the problems of life and work balance may be a hindrance to their careers. Competition between job and family can produce strain carrying over to the job and leading to feelings of guilt, or feelings of jealousy on the part of the spouse/significant other. As a result, the woman manager may feel the need to curtail her time and energy at work, reinforcing gender stereotypes and impacting her career. Too much of a career focus can influence the decisions that the women managers make regarding their health and wellness, marriage/parenthood/relationships with significant others, and the quality of their interpersonal relationships (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993).

Additionally, despite job performance that is usually equal to or better than their male counterparts, women managers are paid less – and those differences in pay usually increase, not decrease over time (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993). They also face a stereotype that men and women have different management styles – and the men's style is superior, as well as other negative stereotypes about women as managers including the impact of emotions, their sexuality, and their inappropriateness for a managerial role (Northcraft & Gutek, 1993). Women in managerial roles often feel as if they are in the limelight and if they fail within those roles in the

organization, it is a much bigger “deal” than if a man were in the role and had failed (Bierema, 1999b).

Women, especially those at the manager and executive levels need to learn to negotiate the power structures in the organizations within which they work in order to have voice, gain access to power, accomplish what they want to accomplish, or just succeed in their jobs, whatever role that may be (Bierema, 1996a, 1999a; Poole, Nielsen, Horrigan, & Langan-Fox, 1998). They need to learn how to play the game, negotiate their way around the system. Women often feel as if the male dominated work environment makes it harder for them as women to learn and negotiate the rules of the culture.

Women who are managers face problems with power relations and feeling at odds with or unsupported by the organization’s culture. However, when women who come from working class background become managers, the problems facing most women managers can be intensified because of their emotions, their ambivalence about being in the position, lack of support from family and others, and feelings of self doubt and fear.

Working class women in management

Women who come from working class backgrounds have been socialized into the values, expectations, beliefs, and familiar roles of working class life and culture. Those values, expectations, beliefs and roles may be different than ones expected of a manager by an organization.

Gender and class (along with race) are major focal points for domination and discrimination in our society. They also are direct influences of the status that women have within an organization – especially women in management positions (Bell, Denton & Nkomo, 1993). When referring to women managers, implied is women who are white and from a

privileged background, and attempts to be more inclusive of race, color or class background are met with anxiety and discomfort (Bell, et.al, 1993). There is a fear that if the problems of women managers become too diluted, polarization will result: “A common outcome of this barrier is that the voices of nonwhite, nonprivileged women remain unheard” (Lugones & Spelman, 1983, cited in Bell, et al, 1993, p. 110).

A woman’s social class of origin has long-term effects on the rest of her life. Johnson (2002) found that the social class origins of the women in her study (both middle class and working class women) not only profoundly influenced their childhoods, but also impacted their adult lives. Women learn from other women, what it means to be a woman, to act as a mother, and in the case of working class women, to use “common sense” (Luttrell, 1987; McRobbie, 1978; Rubin, 1976). By learning from each other and relying on each other, working class women form their own informal social networks, unions, and community organizations, as alternatives to those that might be hierarchical, competitive, and individualistic (Zandy, 1993), and therefore more representative of expectations of a manager in an organization’s culture. In this way, their “class knowledge comes from experience and story, history and memory, and from the urgency of witnessing” (Zandy, 1993, p. 8).

Arguably, managers learn to navigate organizational culture and the expectations that culture places on them, in the workplace – from others. “Workplace learning is not simply individual cognition but a form of contextual social process...is shaped by, and in turn, shapes organizational structure and culture, and has serious implications for ...power relationships” (Bratton, 2001, p. 339). However, there is a lack of literature addressing the issue of conflicts resulting from power imbalances relating to class of origin versus power of the organization. For example, women of working class origin will view power through the lenses of their gender,

class and race which may indeed be markedly different from the power expectations of the organizational hierarchy and corporate culture. Feelings of ambivalence may arise when those same women of working class origin transition into a role such as a managerial role, and now they are faced with not only abiding by the power structures, rules and regulations set forth by a middle or upper class corporate culture – but need to enforce those rules and expectations with their employees who may very well be of working class origin as well.

Emotions are linked to class identities. The social resources and the material resources available to the working class impact their everyday life and culture. This everyday life and culture shapes their daily life experiences, and people respond emotionally. These experience-generated emotional responses are shared by the members of the social class (e.g. the working class) and thus become part of the class identity (Nenga, 2003).

While there has been a dearth of research on working class women who become managers, there has been research on women who came from working class origins and then became members of the academy. This literature shows the struggles that the women had with the transition to this type of professional position.

Working class women in the academy

Emotions of childhood memories, reflective of and shared by others in the same social class, are of such a depth and magnitude that they affect women into adulthood – affecting their current choices of behaviors, their values, self assessment and worth, and beliefs. These shared emotional experiences may help explain why women in academia who came from the working class but are now arguably living a middle class existence, can still feel working class (Nenga, 2003). These emotional experiences manifest themselves in feelings of impostership, a conflict in expectations and a desire to be accepted.

Impostership.

The working class way of looking at things, the grounding in practical knowledge causes the working class adult to value what one does, what one produces – as opposed to what one thinks (Frye, Curran, Pierce, Young, & Ziegler, 2005; Luttrell, 1987). Working class women who enter higher education in an attempt to better themselves often believe they are not supposed to be there, they are in effect “crashing the party ... one is not present legitimately, not invited to join in the experience of higher education” (Frye et al., p.149). Working class women believe that their experience within higher education changes their identities. They discover that “while home and the people there did not change ... ‘you can never go home again’ or ‘feel as if you belong there’ because their identity had changed” (p. 151). Zandy (1993) concurs:

Class identity is easier to obscure and deny than gender and race identity. If you are born into the working class and are willing to change your speech, your gestures, your appearance – in essence to deny the culture of your home and the working class self of your childhood – then you might ‘pass’ as a member of the dominant culture. But you will never belong there. (p. 2).

Conflicting expectations.

Women in the academy who came from a working class background face conflicts between the expectations placed on them by the academy and the issues they faced from their families. They became disillusioned, experienced a sense of isolation and even alienation because they felt they weren’t fully accepted into the academy, nor did their families understand them. They described themselves as “straddlers” and “in limbo” (Richardson, Lawrence-Brown, & Paige, 2004). In describing how this situation impacted her emotionally, one of the women said:

People look at you differently, like you don't fit in. It's a very strange feeling. And in the last year it's finally dawning on me that I've really left a lot behind me that I am never getting back. You know? It's that you know you're moving up, you know you're gaining, but you are also losing at the same time ... I'm still coming to terms with that because I don't see myself as different. I see myself as the same person (p. 48).

Some working class women believe they will not ever feel comfortable in the academy. "Socialization, at least within the [working class] family, was into collective and community-based understandings of the social world, not the competitive individualism we now face in which social networks are about instrumentalism, not connection" (Reay, 1997, p. 21). Working class women academicians also struggle with guilt when they succeed as an academic, by acknowledging and utilizing new class-based knowledge and approaches, they are at the same time drawing attention to those who remain in the working class. This unease was echoed by Skeggs (1997) who also talks about being categorized by others as working class when she attended university. Others acknowledged her presence in a college classroom with "oh, you must be one of those working class people we hear so much about" (p. 130). She discusses this cultural devaluation as being devastating to her; she was humiliated at the time.

I knew I could never be a part of or belong to my new cultural group. But neither could I go back. ... You have to force yourself to enter spaces in which you never feel as if you belong or will 'fit'. The upside of this is that you are always positioned at a distance and can always see from a distance; you never occupy the normalized class space... It is the unease which is completely disturbing and the feeling that negative judgments are constantly being made... (p. 131).

The desire to be accepted.

A person's identity is tied to significant others in her life and to her social context. Therefore, identity development requires that others legitimize her personal identity –the significant others within a past group, a current group or future group of individuals who matter to her. “Society, or more narrowly, the social group must affirm the individual as an accepted member of a particular group in order for a desired social identity to be congruent with a personal identity” (Kaufman, 2003, p. 483). In other words, in order to be accepted by family, school peers, work culture, or any other social group (irrespective of their class), the members of that group need to affirm the individual to be acceptable to be a member of the group. In order to remain acceptable (or become acceptable), an individual may need to explain, defend, account for, or rationalize past or present behaviors that may seem to be inconsistent with what is acceptable to the group (Kaufman, 2003).

When a person is looking at the possibility of leaving one social group (such as a working class family of origin) and facing the possibility of moving into another group (such as an academician or managerial position), she may be reluctant to sever ties with the original group, with her established social foundations. Maintaining the ability to move back and forth between groups, between distinct social identities provides a potentially safe haven, a “home base” and a place to go to - to retreat to - if she faces hostility or rejection from the new group, the significant others in that new group.

Working class women who enter the academy face these internal and external obstacles: strong emotional ties to their working class roots, feelings of impostership, conflicting expectations, and a desire to be accepted. As managers, working class women face competition for advancement and recognition, as do women in the academy (Reay, 1997). Additionally as

managers, working class women face the dichotomy between the value of practical knowledge, of common sense and the manager's use of learned knowledge, of intellectual work – similar situations that are faced by women in the academy (Frye, et. al, 2005). Given the strong socialization into the working class community and the expectations placed on working class girls, the emotions (feelings of impostership, conflicting expectations and a desire to be accepted) that haunt working class women in the academy may indeed be problematic for working class women managers.

Statement of the Problem

There has been research in the area of the conflict working class women face when they become members of the academy. Research relating to women in the academy who came from working class backgrounds shows that although successful by standards of the academy, there is emotional conflict associated with that success. They still feel like imposters, and have conflicts within themselves regarding their origins, their self worth and their suitability for being where they are. In addition, there is a dissonance between their current lifestyle and the expectations of their families of origin. A disconnect, that continues in their adult lives (Frye, et al, 2005; Hey, 2003; hooks, 2000; Luttrell, 1987; Nenga, 2003; Reay, 1997; Skeggs, 1997).

Research discusses the conflicts working class women face throughout their lives, from within their families of origin, through the schools systems, in the community and in the workplace (Edwards, 2004; Luttrell, 1997; Marshall, 1991; Rubin, 1994; Westwood, 1984). There has also been research relating to the issues of power and patriarchy that women managers face in the workplace (Bierema, 1996, 1999, 2003; Fenwick, 2002).

All of these areas are important as they add to the knowledge about working class women's identities and the potential conflicts they face as they go through life experiences and changes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of working class women as they learn to become managers. The influence and effect of the dominant culture and class expectations placed upon them as a result of their gender, class and position within the organization were investigated.

Research Questions

This study explored the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of working class women who become managers in an organization?
2. What have been their experiences of conflict or ambivalence relating to gender and/or class identity as they learn to become managers?
3. What social and/or political forces, including power differentials have impacted them and/or continue to impact them in the transition from working class origins to being a manager?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens that I chose to use for my research was a critical feminist lens. "Like other forms of feminism, this perspective recognizes that structures of dominance and subordination do exist and have been organized around gender, race, class and other differences" (Maneval, 2000, p. 6). However, before explaining my rationale for selecting a critical feminist

perspective, I think it important to explain critical theory – as there are many tenets of critical theory upon which critical feminism is based.

Critical Theory

Critical theory relies foundationally upon Marxist traditional belief that what we accept as a normal world is in reality extremely inequitable and characterized by a system-wide and deliberate exploitation of many people by a few others. The day-to-day issues, problems and situations that people experience are not necessarily of their own making, but are the results of the political inequality of the capitalist system, a system that shapes relationships with other people and imposes belief and value systems upon them (beliefs and values that justify and maintain the current oppressive nature of society) without their realization (Brookfield, 2005).

Fitting hand in glove with this concept of challenging the ideology of the dominant culture, is the notion of hegemony. Hegemony is the process whereby people are deceived into accepting the values, beliefs, etc. of the dominant culture as being good for them – better than good, in their best interest. People learn to internalize these values, accept them as knowledge, and own them, through their cultural and societal institutions. Unbeknown to them, these beliefs and values work against their own interests, while serving the interests of the powerful (Elias & Meriam, 2005; hooks, 1994; Luttrell, 1997).

In critical theory, one of the main aspects through which things are evaluated is the concept of power. Not only does critical theory refer to power over others, it also refers to the idea of power within each individual, whereby people internalize the rules and regulations of their culture and constantly evaluate and ultimately control their thoughts and behaviors as a result (Foucault, 1980). Power becomes part of an individualized self, and manifests itself throughout every aspect of life. Thus, people who are oppressed learn to accept and believe in

the validity of their oppression, because it has been internalized and its influence can never be eliminated. Realizing the insidiousness of power is incredibly difficult because it is accepted and ingrained in ways of thinking, knowing, interacting and speaking (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1980, 1988).

However, one of the criticisms of Marxism and critical theory is that while addressing the repression of the working class, differences among those in the working class - differences such as race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation - are ignored. Critics argue that it is impossible to discount those aspects of difference – and that indeed the dominant culture has used these differences to divide the working class and keep the members of this group focused on their differences instead of looking at the issues that could unite them as a means to overcome their oppression.

Criticisms of critical theory

Critical theory is vastly silent on the subject of gender. Some proponents of feminist pedagogies argue that an understanding of both Marxism and feminism is necessary to challenge ideologies and combat hegemonic thought. By absorbing the feminist struggle into the class struggle of Marxism, it negates the feminist struggle (Hartmann, 1999). Additionally, Marxism's focus is on the oppression of working class laborers – male laborers. This doesn't take into account the alienation and oppression related to domestic work, childbearing and childrearing – tasks done primarily by women, who might also be laboring in the paid workforce. Feminists argue those patriarchal gender systems of power and privilege fuel women's cheap labor, both in paid labor and unpaid domestic labor, and this in turn provides a basis for profit in the capitalist society. Hartmann (1999) believes that it is essential to consider Marxism *and* Feminism. Marxism looks at the historical development of the struggle against capitalism and the abuses of

it, yet it is blind to the struggles of gender. Feminism looks at the struggles of women in the relationships between men and women, yet does not look at the historical perspective. With a ‘marriage’ of both, this is possible. I agree that when studying women from the working class, both lenses are needed – one alone would not do the justice to the understanding of the women’s lives.

Critical feminist theory

A theory that looks at social inequality within the social structures and social relations of a culture needs to take into account race, gender and class. The three intersect. “The fundamental issue for Marxism is not whether there is a need for race, gender and class intersectional analysis, but rather what the definition and agenda of that race, gender and class intersectionality will be” (Belkir, 2001, p. 143). By adding the concept of gender to critical theory in order to serve the well-being of women, it is necessary to challenge its central tendency to view the world through a male lens, and build upon the theory’s elements that are going to be the most useful in furthering the interests of women.

But let us not ignore the issue of class. Class is much bigger than Karl Marx defined it – as a relationship to the means of production. Women don’t necessarily need to recognize class or identify themselves as a distinct social class for issues of class to have an impact upon them. When specific practices that are part of one’s culture are bound up in a socially structured hierarchy of dominance and oppression (in whatever form that may take), these socially and culturally ordained practices will be classed. “In various settings of social life, processes of inequality are produced and reproduced routinely ... this involves both economic and cultural practices” (Devine and Savage, cited in Bottero, 2004, p. 988).

Like critical theory, the concept of power is an important aspect of feminist theory (Bartky, 1999; Hartmann, 1999; Lee-Lampshire, 1994; Okin, 1998). In many ways, the concept of power in women's lives is invisible – they can't see it, but it is always there. It becomes internalized; part of who they are – their values and beliefs, their self concept. The effect of this power then is to bring about “a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 201).

Critical feminism – while maintaining the concern with aspects of power, oppression, and one's position in society relating to such things as race and socio-economic class – looks at how these lenses can be used to “interrogate and explicate the power relationships embedded within women's stories and by so doing better understand their experiences ...” (Maneval, 2000, p. 6). A critical feminist perspective looks at how social structures such as gender, race, and class inform an individual's identity and personal development – and serve to reinforce unequal power relationships that exist in our patriarchal society. By using a critical feminist perspective in this study, the participants' gender and class matter in the analysis of their personal stories. Stories and experiences of ambivalence relating to gender and/or class, the influence of social and political factors and the impact of power relations emerged through the analysis of the narratives of the women.

Methodology Overview

Narrative inquiry was used as the methodology for this study to explore the stories of working class women who became managers in a health care organization. In exploring these stories through a critical feminist lens, I investigated experiences of ambivalence relating to gender and class identity, helping the participants to become aware of the impact of the social and political forces upon the choices they have made and recognize power differentials that have

impacted their lives. “Personal narratives provide summary data through which we can explore ways that different dominant ideologies and power relations are maintained, reproduced, or subverted in the discourses of the respondents’ narratives” (Bloom, 1998, p. 145).

Stories are an important approach a person utilizes in understanding her world. Without conscious thought, people absorb knowledge about the world and how that world works by exchanging stories, testing their version of reality against the stories they hear and tell – and changing their assumptions, perceptions and views of reality as a result. Over the course of history, the give and take of storytelling has allowed women to clarify their social reality and confront hegemonic oppression, sometimes with profound results (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

In a narrative, past events are told in the form of a story and described in a meaningful sequence with a beginning, middle, and end (Davis, 2002; Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). These stories help give order to and create meaning of those events all the while impacting and providing insight into the storyteller’s self-identity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) go on to say:

Personal identity, the answer to the riddle of ‘who’ people are, takes shape in the stories we tell about ourselves. Such stories may not necessarily be the ones we tell to others or to the public at large; they are the narratives that we construct as we orient our present choices and actions in light of our imagined futures and the version of our past that fits...” (p. xvii).

“Human beings are storytellers by nature...a fundamental way of expressing ourselves and our world to others” (McAdams, 1993). Stories are embedded in cultural and/or institutional realities that are important to people; stories are a part of their experiences and shape their

perceptions of their identities (Davis, 2002). By analyzing the narratives, one has an opportunity to analyze the cultural underpinnings of the story as well (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001).

In a study where the intent was to help the participants become cognizant of the social, political and power relations that have impacted their lives, the contribution of gender and class/cultural expectations needed to be taken into consideration as well (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Narratives provided an opportunity to explore these dimensions contributing to the women's stories, as described by the Personal Narratives Group (1989):

Personal narratives are particularly rich sources because, attentively interpreted, they illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve. Moreover, each life provides evidence of historical activity – the working out within a specific life situation of deliberate courses of action that in turn have the potential to undermine or perpetuate the conditions and relationships in which the life evolved (p. 6).

Narrative research provides great depths in understanding the lives and experiences of the storytellers (Lieblich, et.al., 1998). In order to get a depth of understanding, I interviewed and gathered the stories of 9 women who came from working class origins and became managers in a health care organization. Using a variety of participant selection techniques including criterion based (participants who meet pre-determined criteria) and snowball sampling (participants who meet the criteria refer the researcher to other potential participants who also meet the criteria) (Patton, 2002), I asked questions designed to elicit stories from the participants regarding their experiences of becoming managers.

Context, Participants and Data Collection

This study took place within the context of a health care system in a mostly suburban and rural county in south central Pennsylvania. The health system consists of 2 hospitals, a network of family practice clinics, various outpatient clinics such as radiology and physical therapy services and a dialysis center, as well as a home health and hospice care agency and a home medical equipment company.

A health care organization was chosen as the context for the study for two primary reasons. First, health care as an industry provides an excellent example of organizations where women predominate in front line service, technical and patient care positions. As a result, many women who become managers in health care organizations are promoted from those positions. Secondly, this is a health care organization where I have worked for the past eight years. The women who were participants in my study have an established, trusting relationship with me. I am their peer. In encouraging them to tell their stories, stories that contained examples of conflict and strong emotions, the existing rapport that I already had with them was an asset in supporting them as they told me their experiences.

The participants in the study were purposely chosen, deliberately selected as cases which are rich in information from which data can be gleaned (Kuzel, 1999; Patton, 2002; Wolff, 2002). I used participants meeting pre-established criteria who currently or previously worked at the above described health care system: the pre-established criteria include being a woman; coming from a working class family of origin; and having worked in a managerial position in a health care organization for a minimum of three years. All of the women in the study were Caucasian.

The data collection consisted of two extensive conversational interviews; approximately 12 weeks apart allowing me the opportunity to transcribe the participants' stories and have the participants review the transcripts for accuracy. This process called member checking not only allowed for a check for the accuracy of the information conveyed, but also allowed for a time of reflection upon the stories told in preparation for the second session. This promoted self-understanding and encouraged self-determination – two goals of my study (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999). The transcripts of the first and second sessions were reviewed and compared multiple times to glean commonalities and differences (Miller & Crabtree, 1999b). These findings were shared with the participants in a follow up group discussion and review. Again, this allowed the participants the opportunity, not only to review the findings and check for accuracy (Miller & Crabtree, 1999b), but also to dialogue with the researcher and each other regarding the commonalities and differences that emerged. This allowed for further input and clarification, as well as enhancing the credibility of the findings. During the two sets of conversational interviews and the group discussion, good observational techniques were used to determine the congruence between what was said and the behavior, most notably the non verbal behavior of the storytellers. These observations were recorded in field notes.

The data collection and data analysis techniques that I used in this study were tied directly to the critical feminist perspective that I brought to the research. I recognized that my position as a woman, from working class origins, and a manager as well as the similar positions of the study participants played a role in the narratives as well as in my interpretative analysis of them (Olesen, 2000). In addition to an approach to equalizing the power relationship between researcher and participants (Elliott, 2005), the similarities in our backgrounds helped me to gain trust and insight, however Olesen (2000) denies this and “problematized the idea that a feminist

researcher who shares some attributes of a cultural background would, by virtue of that background, have full access to women's knowledge in that culture" (p. 227). Thus, although the similarities may prove useful, I was aware of needing to probe for deeper awareness and making sure that I allowed the participants' own voices to be heard – a basic tenet of feminist research (Olesen, 2000; Tierney and Lincoln, 1997). And finally, it was my intention that the findings of the study, when communicated back to the participants would enlighten them as to the impact of social, political and power influences on their lives and encourage them to address any of those influences in ways that seem to be beneficial to them (Richardson, 1990). If that was an end result of this study, then the use of narrative inquiry for this research will have made an impact in their lives as well as for the good of society, as Bloom (1998) discusses below:

The importance of focusing on women's lives in their personal narratives is great; they illuminate the course of a life over time and the relationship between the individual and society; they demonstrate how women negotiate their 'exceptional' gender status both in their daily lives and over the course of a lifetime; and they make possible the examination of the links between the evolution of subjectivity and its shifts and changes and the development of female identity (p. 146).

Significance of the Study

The identity created through childhood familial, communal, educational and general life experiences as a girl/woman from a working class background is strong and hard to disregard as she goes through the rest of her life. Some girls long for an escape, something different from the life of their childhood experiences and are able to make those dreams come true. The road to attaining the dream is an emotional and social shift and at times, an estrangement from what they knew before. Other girls from a working class background remain safely within those confines of

familial expectations, and don't go on to achieve in school – or to cross the boundary into a higher social class. This motivation to achieve something beyond the class boundaries of their childhood and earlier life experiences of community and school must be generated from within the girl herself. But such success, should it come, has a price – the pain of separation from a culture and perhaps from family/friends/community and a loss (or at least a shift) of identity (Lucey, et. al, 2003). These losses of belonging, of safety, of identity can “unconsciously constitute a threat to our very survival” (p. 295).

The issue of who crosses the class line and who doesn't, why such choices are made or not made and the consequences of those decisions make for interesting and fascinating stories. But stories will only be words unless the researcher looks beyond the words to meanings (Luttrell, 1997; Rubin 1994,). By doing so, the researcher can give a voice to the people and to begin to “understand the sometimes multiple meanings that lie beneath them, to apprehend what motivates the things people say and do, and to uncover the contradictions between the two” (Rubin, 1994, pp. 24-25). As a result of the stories told by working class women:

We learn that life stories are about self-understandings and social identities; that these life stories are shaped by multiple structures of domination; and that life stories are shaped by the desire for mutual recognition. But there is a fourth, more visionary lesson: that telling life stories can provide impetus and direction for new ways of being and acting in the world” (Luttrell, 1987, p. 119).

Researchers need to understand how working class women interpret their behavior, the symbolism behind the meanings/behind the behaviors/behind the choices – as well as the way these are experienced in their everyday lives. Right now, only part of the puzzle is known, but through stories of others, specifically ones who have crossed the border into positions usually not

attained by working class women, a full picture can begin to emerge. By having a better understanding of the struggles and conflicts these women went through, adult educators will have a better view on how to assist, encourage and empower them to achieve their goals. It is important that adult educators respect the adult participants in the educational context – respect them, respect the mistakes they have made, and respect the knowledge they bring to the joint process that is adult education (Horton & Freire, 1990). Meeting the participants where they are, where their lives and experiences have brought them and acknowledging the impact of those experiences and conflicts are key to excelling as adult educators.

Additionally, if adult educators wish to be emancipatory in their approach, it is important they understand the issues, problems, background, and culture of their adult participants – at least as best as that is possible (hooks, 1994, 2003; Horton & Freire, 1990). Freire summed it up nicely when he stated: “Education is not neutral...instead of reproducing the dominant ideology, an educator can denounce it” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p.64/118).

This study also has an impact on the field of human resources development. Human resources development, workplace learning is by its very nature, adult learning. It is an integral part of adult learning, as much learning takes place in the workplace, albeit informally (Marsick, et al, 2006; Skule, 2004). Women in managerial roles often feel as if they are in the limelight. If they fail in their roles in the organization, they feel their failure is more noticeable and more likely to be discussed by others in the organization than if a man were in the role and had failed (Bierema, 1999b). Women, especially those at the managerial and executive levels need to learn to negotiate the power structures in the organizations within which they work in order to have voice, gain access to power, and accomplish what they want to accomplish, or just succeed in their jobs, whatever role that may be. In addition, it is important for those workplace

professionals who assist employees in various ways (such as career counselors and human resource professionals) to have an understanding of the impact a working class identity and subsequent identity conflict has on women employees in general, and on managers in particular. This will aid in the professional counsel they give to women who come from that particular class background.

Finally, this study had significance for me personally because I have come from a working class background and have crossed that invisible class line into a management position. The struggles that I have faced along the way, the self doubt, the feelings of impostership, and the disconnection with my family of origin all have left a mark on how I look at the world. Earlier in my adult life, I became acutely aware of the issues of gender inequality and I have watched other women struggle with aspects of male privilege in our society and in various workplaces. As I've pursued my graduate studies in adult education, I have found comfort in critical feminist theories and realized that the feelings I possessed and the doubts I've uncovered are shared by others from similar backgrounds. But this is not discussed in the workplace and this study helped put a name to the feelings that I believe other women possess. By so doing, I hoped to assist them in identifying power issues that are affecting them and be encouraged to address the power that oppresses them.

Assumptions of this Study

1. In order to view this study from a critical feminist perspective, I assumed that the health care organization in which I conducted my research is reflective of a patriarchal hierarchy of power.

2. I also assumed that there was an internal (and at times external) conflict or at least an ambivalence that ensued when working class women transfer from a position that is considered service or technical (working class) into a manager position.
3. I assumed that managers in a health care organization have expectations placed upon them by themselves and others that are different from the expectations of values and behaviors placed upon working class women.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study was specific to the women who are participants and to the health care organization in which they work. It is not to be generalized to all working class women who become managers in a health care organization or in any workplace.
2. By assumption as outlined above and by definition of participants, this study only looked at working class women who have experienced an identity conflict on becoming managers. There may be working class women who become managers who do not experience an identity conflict.
3. I limited the potential participants in this study by my definition of working class.
4. I limited this study to working class women; there may be identity conflicts that working class men experience when they move into a manager position as well. However, this study did not address them.
5. By looking at the constructs of socioeconomic class and gender, I eliminated other constructs of identity, such as race or sexual orientation as a factor in this study. These other aspects of identity may well play a role in the women's experiences and their stories. However, this study looked specifically at issues relating to gender, class and managerial position in the organization.

Definition of terms

Working Class

“Working class positioning then is the result of a historical relationship that has produced a distinct set of values, understandings, and ideologies that have come to be associated with working class culture.” (Maneval, 2000, p. 14). As used throughout this dissertation, working class reflects a place on the social hierarchy of our culture where the mind set is one of self reliance, a fierce love of family and community, and a determination to make good as defined by members of my community and class. For the most part, the labors of those in the working class as I define it are manual, service or support. These are generally not the executives and leaders of corporations – and education is usually high school, vocational/technical school, or a 2 year college or community college program. However, the type of job one does, the education one has, and the amount of income one brings in do not by themselves define someone as working class. Regardless of lifestyle, possessions, or income, those in the working class are not the owners or leaders of businesses, they are the workers.

Manager

As used in this study, a manager is someone who has responsibility for two or more employees and day to day operational responsibility for a department or unit within the health care organization. In this study, the title of manager was differentiated from supervisor in that in addition to the above parameters, she had financial responsibility for the daily budgetary operations of the department or unit within the health care organization. She was recognized within the organization as a manager by the title “manager, director, or administrative director”.

Chapter One Summary

This chapter briefly outlines the premise for the study and includes a description of the problem, the purpose of my research, the questions guiding the research, a brief discussion of the critical feminist perspective guiding the study and an overview of the methodology I used. In addition, the chapter includes the assumptions and limitations of the study as well as a definition of some terms used throughout the study. This narrative inquiry explored, using a critical feminist lens, the experiences of working class women who become managers in a health care organization. As such, it provided increased knowledge for adult educators who teach women from a working class background and assisted them in their educational approach. It also increased the knowledge for human resource development professionals who work with women managers who may have come from a working class background. Finally, the findings of the study were shared with the women participants as well in order to deepen their understanding of the meanings of those experiences and to assist them in realizing the impact of internal and external forces upon those experiences and ultimately upon their own identity.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years, there has been an interest in what it means to be a member of the working class, and how a society that seems to view itself as predominantly middle class is actually a classed society. There has also been interest in women in management and the struggles that those women face in the corporate world. Additionally, there has been some research on women who originally come from a working class background and then by virtue of education or position change, enter into a role where the expectations placed on them are no longer those of a working class woman, specifically the academy. My area of interest was focused on working class women who become managers. In this literature review, I begin with a discussion of my theoretical framework; briefly discuss class identity development; offer a description and definition of working class; describe working class women's identity development and how it affects their beliefs and expectations; discuss issues pertinent to women managers; then discuss issues relating to a conflict in such beliefs and expectations.

A Critical Look at Critical Theory

People are shaped by their social relationships and by their culture. Underlying the shaping of one's identity is the issue of power – an aspect of reality (political or social) that is always present, never absent: “power is ‘already there,’ that one is never ‘outside’ it, that there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system” (Foucault, 1980, p. 46). There are, however some concerns relating to issues of gender (among other aspects of positionality) that are disregarded in critical theory. Because this study used a critical feminist lens, it is important to discuss these issues and concerns.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is based upon Marxist belief that what is accepted as customary reality is quite unjust and illustrates a widespread and conscious oppression of most people by a few powerful elite. The daily frustrations and oppressive situations experienced are not a result of anything within the control of people, but result from the political inequalities that exist in the capitalist system. Although this injustice is general in nature, there are specific disparities dealt to those whose differences in race, gender, and class separate them from those with whom power and influence rest. “Advocates of critical theory see social practices and discourses, including organizational and managerial, as mirroring Western traditional ways of social-political domination over ‘others’” (Ogbor, 2001, p. 146).

Critical theory as a critique of dominant economic structures

Marx believed that system wide inequality leads to the alienation of people causing a diminishment of their humanity (Brookfield, 2005). Because people learn to accept without question the expectations of thought and behavior placed upon them by the dominant culture and society, “capitalism shapes social relations and imposes – often without our knowledge – belief systems and assumptions that justify and maintain economic and political inequity” (p. 13). Marx (1957) criticized the tendency for the bourgeoisie (the owners; those in power) to make profits, earn interest or collect rents based upon the labor of others. Indeed, he insisted that one of the tenets of our dominant culture is to “deceive and induce, to terrify and compel, the productive labourer to work for the smallest possible portion of the produce of his own labour” (Thompson, cited in Marx, 1957, p. 13). Marx believed that our society has made an interest in money and profit people’s biggest motive. “The need for money is the real need created by the modern economy, and the only need which it creates...the expansion of production and of needs becomes

an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites” (Marx, cited in Fromm, 1969, p. 26).

Those in control of the manufacturing need to constantly find ways to increase profit: purchase raw materials for lower prices; keep the cost of food lower so that wages can remain depressed, and “create a supply situation in which it would be possible to absorb a growing proportion of the rural population in the factories” (Gramsci, 1977, p. 301). In the extreme, this will cause the working class people to pressure the managerial and owner classes to make improvements in the living standards – and a struggle will ensue, ultimately forcing the bourgeoisie to make changes which will not only improve production, but also improve the lives of the workers themselves.

Lenin goes even further, stating that “all distinctions between workers and intellectuals, and certainly distinctions of trade and profession, must be utterly obliterated” (Lenin, quoted in Holst, 1999, p. 410). This obliteration, he believes, can only come about from the workers themselves as they organize around Marxist principles and become a force to be reckoned with as they “expose all abuses of power under capitalism and work directly with those non-proletarian sectors affected by these abuses” (Holst, 1999, p. 416).

However, because the unequal structures of capitalism are portrayed as normal or unable to be changed, dominant culture encourages people who are not successful (as defined by those in power in that dominant culture) to see themselves as responsible for their failures to be successful. As a result, those in power (the dominant groups, the propertied class, etc.) can maintain and perpetuate the status quo without too strong of a challenge from those who are not in power (Nesbit, 2006). This tendency for those oppressed by the powerful to blame themselves for their failures is called hegemony.

Central ideas of critical theory

Hegemony is an important concept in critical theory that explains how people are deceived into accepting the values and beliefs of the dominant culture as being good for them – in their best interest. People learn to internalize these values, accept them as knowledge, and own them, through their cultural and societal institutions: families, schools, other socially acceptable institutions, and the media. Unbeknown to them, these beliefs and values work against their own interests, while serving the interests of the powerful. The paradox of this concept is that while working so hard to embrace the ideals that they believe are in their own best interest, people actually become slaves to the oppressors who are making the rules and setting those values. “The function of this ideology is to maintain an unjust social and political order. Ideology does this by convincing people that existing social arrangements are naturally ordained, and obviously work for the good of all” (Brookfield, 2005, p 41).

One of the ironies of hegemony is that ordinary people look at their social situation as caused by fate, or God – but critical theory would say that the social situation is controlled by the dominant culture, the elite culture that is in control. People learn to accept as natural, the “way things are” – even if those ways are unjust; this becomes a “collective attainment of a single cultural ‘climate’” (Gramsci, 1995, p. 156). People learn hegemonic thought in everyday relationships – passed on between individuals, not just from governments and institutions: “Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces that comprise it, but in the entire international and world field....” (Gramsci, 1995, p 157).

Power is a major evaluative lens in critical theory. In Marx’s original treatise, power meant power over others. Conversely, French theorist, Michel Foucault refers to the power

within each individual, whereby people become self-disciplined, and adhere by following the 'rules' every day.

Foucault (1980) believes that people internalize the rules and regulations of their culture causing them to constantly evaluate and ultimately control their thoughts and behaviors. Power is a part of one's identity and shows itself in one's actions and ways of speaking, attitudes and beliefs throughout every aspect of their lives. This disciplinary power, the inner voice that tells people what they can and cannot do, how they should or shouldn't act, what they are to believe or not to believe comes from the dominant culture – thus, according to critical theory, people who are subjugated (in many cases, this is meant to refer to working class people) learn to accept and believe in the validity of their repression, because it has been internalized (Brookfield, 2005). Power is always present in human interactions (even in the most intimate day to day relationships); its influence can never be eliminated. Recognizing the impact of power is quite difficult because it is established and embedded in people's ways of thinking and knowing, ways of interacting and ways of speaking:

Americans are said to lack class consciousness, with the overwhelming majority identifying themselves as 'middle-class.' Those who have not yet moved into the middle class can aspire to do so because it is believed that individuals who work hard enough, who are ambitious and skillful can rise above all obstacles. This celebration of freedom, individualism, and the quest to 'become somebody' is coupled with a pernicious cultural ignorance and denial of social inequalities, violence, and structures of domination. In this way, the American elite are able to convince those who aren't, that status, privilege, and power are of little or no significance. Indeed, their ascendancy as rulers depends upon the appearance that color, class, ethnicity, and gender do not

determine who counts as a 'somebody' or who attains the American dream. (Luttrell, 1997, p. 113)

Indeed, it can be argued that educational systems are prime communication mediums for hegemony and power. Individuals and groups use education as a way to perpetuate their positions of privilege and power and in essence, reproduce existing hierarchies of social relationships and expectations. Education plays an important role in this social reproduction of the hierarchy of status and privilege by portraying such hierarchies as normal and the natural order of things (Nesbit, 2006).

Another aspect of critical theory that is pertinent to this study is the concept of lifeworld. In a nod to Alfred Schutz, Brookfield (2005) describes lifeworld as “the “preconscious, taken for granted presuppositions, understandings, and perceptual filters that determine how we experience reality” (p. 56). People are not aware of this, but do not question their assumptions, experiences, values, or their expectations of others and themselves. This lifeworld is a shared concept – the meanings of these assumptions, experiences, values, and expectations are shared with, and understood by others in the culture. This sharing allows people to communicate with each other; they speak the same “language” – the language of the culture. And because they are unaware of this lifeworld, they are unaware of its power; the power of the rules and regulations that shape their behaviors and their ethics – influencing and affecting how they live every aspect of their lives – their private and public selves.

However, while looking at the oppression of the working class, critical theorists ignore the issues of race and gender (among other socially constructed differences between people in the working class, such as cultural background and sexual orientation). It is impossible to discount those aspects of difference – indeed those in power have been accused of using these

differences to divide the working class: keeping members focused on their disparities instead of looking at the similarities that could serve to bring them together and overcome their subjugation.

Feminist criticism of critical theory

More than ever there is a need for the continued struggle against historical social inequalities based on race, class and gender. We need to integrate racism, sexism, and classism into the Marxist analysis of capitalism in which race or gender or class serves as a point of entry through which the varied forms of social inequality can and must be understood. Thus, in recognizing the centrality of race, gender and class issues in the struggle against economic inequality and exploitation and cultural subordination and domination, we will be able to avoid the dramatic mistakes of the past that considered racism, sexism, and classism as divisive issues. (Belkhir, 2001, p. 158)

A feminist criticism of critical theory is a lack of focus on gender. If identity is socially and culturally constructed, then an individual's gender, not only her class, is shaped by social and cultural ideology as well. This shaping would be different for men and women. If social and cultural ideological expectations are different for men and women, approaches to challenging that ideology need to be different. If hegemonic influences are constantly at work to encourage men and women to internalize as cultural wisdom certain beliefs about themselves and the culture, then it is logical to assume that those influences are different for men and for women. Power influences would be different for either gender – again based upon social and cultural expectations. In other words, approaches to the learning tasks of adult development outlined in critical theory, would vary based upon gender. Yet, critical theory is vastly silent on the subject. “First-generation critical theory is strong on the analysis of alienated labor or the way repressive

tolerance effectively neuters alternate ideologies but weak on the analysis of patriarchy as a source of female alienation” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 310).

An understanding of both Marxism and feminism is necessary to challenge ideologies and combat hegemonic thought. Hartmann (1999) likens the ‘marriage’ of Marxism and feminism to a marriage under English Common Law: “Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism.” (p. 424) Absorbing the feminist struggle into the class struggle of Marxism nullifies the feminist struggle.

Marxism’s focus on the oppression of working class laborers by the capitalist managerial or ruling class is really a focus on male laborers. This doesn’t explain the estrangement and repression surrounding domestic work, childbearing and childrearing – usually performed by women, in addition to their labor in the paid workforce as well. Established patriarchal gender systems of power and privilege encourage women’s toil; both in paid labor and unpaid domestic labor, and this in turn provide a basis for profit in society, profit for the managerial and ruling class.

Hartmann (1999) believes that it is important to look at both Marxism *and* Feminism. Whereas Marxism looks at the historical development of the struggle against and abuses of capitalism, it is blind to gender issues. Conversely, Feminism looks at gender issues in the relationships between men and women, yet does not look at the historical perspective. By combining both, it is possible to look at both gender and the historical perspective of class struggles. In this study of women from the working class, both perspectives are needed – one would not do the justice to the approach as does a combination of both.

The theoretical lens that I have chosen to use for my research is a critical feminist lens. “Critical feminism provides a theoretical lens by which to deconstruct and problematized social

power relationships and their effects on how various women come to interpret their experiences” (Maneval, 2000, p.6). The nature of power relationships was fundamental to this study: to gain a better understanding of the experiences of working class women who become managers it was necessary to look at the interaction between their class and gender positionality and their roles as managers.

Any theory which looks at social inequality within the structures of society and in cultural relationships needs to take into consideration race, gender and class. To look at only one of these, is to ignore the reality of their intersection (Belkir, 2001).

Indeed, some feminists argue that capitalism and patriarchy are completely intertwined “The very success of capitalism ...depends not only upon the way in which labor has been divided and naturalized but upon an accompanying ideology which identifies women with a nature that is both passive and irrational.” (Lee-Lampshire, 1994, p. 186) Within this viewpoint, our patriarchal system that rewards male supremacy is a social structure that provides capitalism with a means of control. Women and men learn to accept and internalize such controls, to accept them as legitimate, and true.

In many ways, the concept of power in women’s lives is invisible – people cannot see it, but it is always there. It becomes internalized; part of who they are – their values and beliefs, and their self concept. The effect of this power then is to bring about “a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1979, p. 201). An area where power and hegemony can be said to have great influence is in the area of class and identity development. I now turn to a brief discussion of those areas.

Class Identity Development

Historically, class has been defined in relationship to production in a capitalist economy or by a person's income or education; but class is more than these things (Weber, 1968). A person's social class involves behavior, basic assumptions, taught behaviors, expectations of selves and others, how one thinks of the future, and how problems are understood and resolved (hooks, 2000).

Economic, social and cultural factors profoundly influence how we live and what we do. The societies we live in, the relationships we have and create with other people, the ways we accommodate or resist unfairness and oppression, and the ways we choose to think about these phenomena are both limited and enabled by our place in the economic structure of society. Whether we like it or not, at individual, community, and societal levels, everything we believe and everything we do is influenced by our place in an economic and social order. (Nesbit, 2006, p. 172)

Defining Class Identity

There is more to being part of a socio-economic class than how much money constitutes the family income, more than the type of job a person performs even though those things are part of the package. To be a certain class carries with it a mindset regarding such things as the value (or lack thereof) of education for "people like us," self worth as compared to others in the society – and what the dominant culture communicates as "success," the expected, gendered roles and familial ties as communicated through the power and authority of the family and culture, and an understanding of the need to acquiesce and fight against forces of oppression at the same time – forces of oppression such as bosses or managers or teachers (voices of authority). Although, social class *is* a location on the structured hierarchy of power within a patriarchal and capitalist

culture –acknowledging one’s place, trying to fit into one’s expected roles, and becoming successful as defined by the dominant culture and the class culture itself, within the limits established by those forces of power; “class is about more than money; it’s about safety and security, knowing that what you have today, you will have tomorrow” (Griffith, 2003, p. 65).

Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress, or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you have ‘A’ levels or went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being. (Kuhn, cited in Hey, 2003, p. 329)

“Class identity is not truly reproduced until it has properly passed through the individual and the group, until it has been recreated in the context of what appears to be personal and collective volition” (Willis, 1977, p. 2).

In order to explore how the identity development of working class women develops, a literature that holds great promise is one where stories are told by working class women themselves. People tell their stories for many different reasons. Stories can serve many purposes such as justifying behaviors or actions, as a means of reconciling past experiences with current life, and as a way of developing one’s identity (Luttrell, 1997). The path that peoples’ lives take results from their daily life experiences – from events, from access (or not) to the resources available to them, and from their interaction with the social, cultural and political systems in which they are entrenched (Rubin, 1994). Before looking specifically at working class identity, I discuss class identity development in a general sense.

Class Identity Development

How an individual views herself is developed in many ways by how she perceives she is viewed by others. The more frequently she is treated in a certain way as a result of this perceived identity, the more she sees herself in terms of that identity. In this way, the identity she takes on is a social identity, partly resulting from the groups to which she belongs (Settles, 2001).

Culture is constantly being shaped and reshaped, produced and reproduced by the demands of life (Morgan, 1996). It is produced and reproduced through family, through life experiences, through community interaction and through education. The structures and processes of our educational system and the relationships scripted for teachers and students contribute to this social reproduction of culture (Lareau, 1987; Smith & Hanley, 2003). “Educational institutions legitimate the re-creation of social hierarchies by making differences in income and social status appears to be the result of merit” (Smith & Hanley, 2003, ¶ 23).

Class structures and class expectations are socially reproduced (Nesbit, 2006; Ohmann, 2003; Smith & Hanley, 2003; Willis, 1977). “Class is not a category...but rather an historical relationship between one group of people and another...It is defined by men [sic] as they live their own history” (Thompson, cited in Nesbit, 2006, p. 175).

Class identity has both internal and external sources. It is not as visible as an identity as race or gender, but also not easy to conceal. Class as an identity is the way people act each day: habits and feelings as well as ways they develop and foster relationships. Class is shown by the way people talk and act (Ohmann, 2003). When asked, people have no trouble placing themselves into a socio-economic class and identifying with it (Nesbit, 2006).

Class identity is socially reproduced. Families and the schools and the relationships between the two play a critical role in this reproduction of class identity (Lareau, 1987); as do communities and work/life experiences. However, before discussing the development of a working class identity, I offer the definition of working class to be used in this study.

Defining Working Class

In order to formulate a definition of working class for this dissertation, I briefly explore the ways working class is defined in the literature. Then, I present my own definition of working class, which is the definition that will be used throughout the rest of the dissertation.

“Working class positioning then is the result of a historical relationship that has produced a distinct set of values, understandings, and ideologies that have come to be associated with working class culture” (Maneval, 2000, p. 14). The term working class can be defined in a number of ways. Often, working class is defined in economic terms, at times from a deficient perspective, as in those with less money or economic capital. For example, hooks, (2000) describes members of the working class as “those who are not poor, but could be poor tomorrow if jobs are lost” (p. 6). At times, the working class is described in labor terms, as in providing the manual labor, not the intellectual capital. Zandy (1993), states that the working class is comprised of men who perform blue collar manual labor jobs, or low-wage service positions. She goes on to describe working class women as women who: “do the work that more privileged men and women do not want to do. They clean; they cook; they care for children. ... they labor in factories and mills... they work as sales ‘girls,’ as bank clerks, as receptionists” (p. 5). Often, working class families are defined by their parents’ occupations – particularly the father/husband (Zandy, 1995). Examples of such occupations that would place someone in the working class –

irrespective of the amount of their income – are: short order cook, chemical factory worker, truck driver, clerical worker, waitress and meat wrapper.

Historically, working class has been defined in terms of labor. A problem with defining working class in this way is that the American economy is changing from one of production of goods to one of provision of services. In the early days of class consciousness (Marx, Engels, Gramsci, etc.), when large numbers of men (and women and children too) labored together in mills and factories, it was easy to differentiate the workers (thus the working class) from the owners (the propertied class). Today's economy is increasingly reliant on knowledge workers, as opposed to manual labor, and people in traditional "white collar" positions may be considered working class (McCarriston, 1995); therefore it is not viable for occupation alone to determine socioeconomic class.

hooks (2000) describes "the working masses who labor long and hard but still have difficulty making ends meet" (p. vix). Working class people are the largest group of families in the country (Rubin, 1994) - people who work at the lowest level of manufacturing and service jobs and whose education often consists of high school, trade school or vocational education. They usually are paid by the hour rather than having a weekly salary. They go to work everyday, sometimes in unpleasant conditions to provide for their families. Their dreams *may* include either one day "making it" for themselves – or at the least, making a different life for their children.

As used throughout this dissertation, working class reflects a place on the social hierarchy of our culture where the mind set is one of self reliance, a fierce love of family and community, and a determination to make good as defined by members of my community and class. For the most part, the labors of those in the working class as I define it are manual, service or support.

These are generally not the executives and leaders of corporations – and education is usually high school, vocational/technical school, or a 2 year college or community college program. However, the type of job one does, the education one has, and the amount of income one brings in do not by themselves define someone as working class. Class is a way of looking at the world; less about possessions or lifestyle and more about power and privilege. Despite lifestyle, possessions, or income, members of the working class are not the owners or leaders of businesses, they are the workers. They know they are not powerful and/or privileged as the dominant culture defines these things; however ties to the working class culture, values and beliefs are strong and in many cases positive, self-fulfilling and affirming.

Working Class Women Identity Development

In reviewing literature relating to identity development in working class women, four major themes emerged. The following sections will include discussions on the roles of the family and the community as well as the impact of school and work experiences in the development of an identity as a working class woman.

The role of the family.

It would be wrong to imply that all working class parents act in the same ways or share the same values – every parent, indeed every person has their own way of relating to class themes and there is not any implication here that all working class parents push their children into one simple, standard, universal working class mould. Most working class parents, like many parents of any socio-economic class, want a better life for their children. A better life means having a safe job that pays fairly – where employees are treated reasonably. This better life should not “extract as its cost familial and historic memory” (Zandy, 1995, p. 1). However, there are some recurring themes in the literature relating to the identity of women who come from

working class origins – and the impact that the family has on the development of that identity and on the values and expectations those girls have as they become women.

One recurring theme is that of being “good.” Working class life can be difficult – the work is physical and the hours may be long, so parents may have concerns about their children’s’ future. Parents may attempt to keep tight control over their children while they live at home, even if those children are adults. There may be an expectation of “respectability”- that the children don’t “run wild” and dishonor the family name (Edwards, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1994). Concern over what others will think can be on the mind of working class parents – being “good,” meaning being well behaved and respectable is important in order to be seen as successful parents.

A related theme in working class women’s identity development is the importance of the role of the mother or mother figure in the family structure. Edwards (2004) found that in “settled” working class families (intact family relationships, stable work history for at least one parent, and roots in a community), the women were proud of being good mothers, of having “good kids” and with their belief that they were “good people.” These mothers provided a role model for their children’s (in particular, their daughters’) identity development in the areas of stability in relationships, self-control, and orderly households – in contrast to others whose families are “no good” or “troublemakers.” The parents (particularly the mother figure) may reinforce this by restricting the children’s mobility and screening the children’s friends to keep them from trouble or from bad influences.

This gender identity development is a particularly strong theme identified in the literature and seems to be unrelated to whether or not the mother or mother figure works in the paid labor force. Although many working class women have worked outside of the home throughout the

years, it is only recently that families are beginning to realize that marriage isn't an escape from the necessity of work in the world. Although the reality was often different from the fantasy, mothers continued to encourage their daughters, telling them that they could have lives different from their own if they married the right man; fathers encouraged their daughters, telling them that their worth was validated by marriage and children (Rubin, 1994). Johnson (2002) also found that most of the women in her study worked a "second shift" of housework and domestic chores. The women generally put in twice as much time as their husbands doing the household chores and child care responsibilities. A short generation cycle for working class families (something also found in Rubin's study) meant that many of the working class women also had responsibilities for caring for grandchildren living with them, as well as their own children. These women in mostly unskilled jobs would come home so exhausted that it was hard to accomplish those added family responsibilities, even though it was understood, the responsibilities were theirs to fulfill.

Often, working class men want quiet, obedient homemakers. There may be a fear that too much education ruins their daughters' chances of getting married. And to be married is to be respectable. hooks (2000) describes coming to the realization, however that being respectable as defined by her working class culture, and being respected as defined by her were two different matters. "Respect was about being seen and treated like you matter. Men like my daddy did not respect women. To them a woman could be bought, like any other object" (p. 20).

The family of origin as well as the nuclear family consisting of spouse/significant other and children, not only has an impact upon the role of power and authority in the development of working class life, but also has a tremendous impact on the identity development of working class women, as well as men. But marriage, while an escape from the family of origin, also

serves to intensify the expectations of woman as caregiver, woman as mother, often woman as subordinate to the man –developing her identity in part by the relationships with her “man” and her children. Often, role delineation is clear in the family: to the women fall the domestic chores and child-rearing responsibilities, the men occasionally help “if she asks” (Rubin, 1976).

The mother and child relationship is another common theme in descriptions of a working class family; this relationship is often placed above relationships with other adults, including the father. Working class mothers view their relationships with their children as the central element of their lives, transcending childhood – as indicated by women’s relationship with their own mothers or adult female relatives. However, these relationships with other women provide significant assistance in coping with the issues that arise in daily living (Mitchell & Green, 2002) and guarantee an important safety net by providing practical emotional (and financial) support in times of stress or when advice is desperately needed.

Motherhood is often seen as a “rite of passage” in the working class culture – a symbol of adult status in the working class community (Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1976). Along with, and often accompanying motherhood as an identity, comes the issue of “common sense”. This notion of common sense (as opposed to school smart, educated book learning) is a recognition and validation of knowledge that comes from life experiences – things that people have seen and thus know to be accurate (Johnson, 2002; Luttrell, 1987; Willis, 1977). Often the working class family history and structure sets up a rejection of school work, and an emphasis that practice is more important than theory – practical ability comes first and is in some ways seen as a necessary foundation for any other kind of knowledge (Willis, 1977).

Luttrell (1987) describes this notion of common sense as “self and identity forming” (p. 26), that it is most often indicated in how working class women solve daily problems – and how

such common sense is passed on through interactions with family members and friends within the community. Other women in the working class community who have been able to navigate the maze of various bureaucracies such as government or health care agencies and schools were seen as true experts in dealing with day to day situations.

Parents do their best to equip us for the world, as they know it by passing along their ‘stock of knowledge’, which includes their understanding of their own and their children’s place in the larger scheme of things. This stock of knowledge includes a commonsense understanding of the way things are and the way they should be, and consists of explicitly taught formal knowledge that is imparted by social institutions – especially schools – and also tacitly understood, informal knowledge that is passed along incidentally in the normal course of everyday life. Our social class shapes what we take for granted as normal (Johnson, 2002, p. 19)

Running throughout the literature relating to gender identity development of working class women, is the expectation that they are heterosexual. The idea that a woman’s sexuality might be anything other than heterosexual is not discussed. Bisexual, asexual, or lesbian lifestyles as choices suitable for working class women are notable by their absence in the literature. This expectation of heterosexuality and the appropriate roles for women are reinforced by the community in which the working class girls grow up. I now turn to that context.

The role of the community.

Another recurring theme in the literature on working class identity development is that of the community. The community in which a person lives reinforces social class values. Socially acceptable behaviors are reinforced while failure to adhere to behavioral and lifestyle expectations is disdained. Tastes in decorating, reading materials, which movies one attends,

choices in doctors or other service care providers, which organizations one belongs to, are all representative of one's class. These behaviors, values, and choices are symbolic of socioeconomic class by virtue of being socially defined as acceptable and even expected for members of that class. In addition, a person with whom one associates is also indicative of one's social class (Yodanis, 2002).

However, there is still an American myth alive and well regarding the promise of success if one just tries hard enough. Myths are part of who we are as Americans and offer guidance for public and private behavior. Many working class people also believe that this is a nation of equals – that merit, not class determines one's worth and one's success. This belief in self-sufficiency reinforces the “rules of the game” – the hegemonic conviction that all start as equal and that if people don't succeed it is not political or social structures that interfere with the success, not the limited access to resources (financial, educational or social), but people's own inadequacy. Working-class communities and working-class culture reinforces this myth, even though most working class children grow up and remain in the working class. Rubin (1976) writes: “... the outcome reinforces the reasoning that says they're deficient” (p. 240).

Communities reinforce identity – to the point of creating names or labels that are seen as derogatory when used by others. For example, the term “redneck” when used by people who live, work and play in a working class community in rural Texas was seen by others within that community as a term of identity, pride and working-class inclusion: “a particular class-positioned way of being ‘white’” (Fox, 2004, p. 25). However, if the term redneck was used by others from outside the community, the term would be considered derogatory, an insult. In this rural Texas town, taverns were a focal point of life, and were essentially working-class exclusive. Irrespective of ethnic background, the basic requirement to be involved in the social

life surrounding the tavern or bar was that the person be of a working class background, “most powerfully signified by the possession of a working-class ‘voice’ and by competence in (strongly gendered) working-class cultural domains” (p. 27). Referring to small town bars (and interestingly, small town churches as well), Fox writes:

Both institutions can seem, in the present, like patriarchal time machines, spaces in which emotionally explosive male performance is celebrated as a nostalgic emblem of working class identity, especially in song and verbal art. These are places, as well, where most women are commonly expected to conform to norms of femininity that are simultaneously pure and sexualized, and almost always submissive to male interests. (p. 255)

Not only do communities reinforce class identity, but also at times they brutally punish breaches of gender related class expectations. Throughout history, the societal expectations relating to the sexual conduct of women, including working class women, have been strict and strongly enforced. One of those norms, enforced by the community, has been the forbidding of sexual relationships between white working class women and men of color. If such women slept with men of color, they were doubly labeled – as “white trash:” women who are sexually active and as women who crossed the racial boundaries relating to intimacy. No such boundaries existed for white working class men who slept with women of color. “White working class women who joined with men of color could pay a tremendous price ... chilling stories of the mutilation, murder and rape of poor white women in the rural South who chose sexual relations with African American men” (Fran, 1998, p. 87).

Regardless of the community in which one lives, the American Dream of an education as the ticket to a better life lives on. Schools are supposed to provide each child the same education

and the same chance to making a better life for themselves. But reality may be different from that dream.

Identity as learned through the school experience.

As women from the working class strive to “be somebody,” to break free of traditional expectations, to attain “success” (as defined by the working class and dominant culture), many will turn to education as a way to “escape.” However, women’s stories reveal that although American educational systems claim to pave the path for anyone who is educated and does well in school to achieve “The American Dream,” the reality is that the schools actually serve to reinforce existing divisions and in many ways, perpetuate the hegemony of the dominant culture. These reinforced class values, expected behaviors and ingrained beliefs about what life will be and should be like in the future continue to affect working class girls beyond their formative years in the educational system.

Luttrell (1997) showed via the stories of the women in her study that schools divide students and pit them against each other along the lines of gender, race and class. As a result of separations and hostilities amongst the girls resulting from such divisions, teachers become viewed as representatives of the dominant and oppressive culture – emissaries of messages often in conflict with reality of these working class young women. Nowhere was this more noticeable than in the issue of “teacher’s pet.” To be the teacher’s pet meant you were a “good girl,” a means of social control, a way for the girls to regulate or police themselves.

Schools may deny that they perpetuate culturally hegemonic practices along racial, gender, and class lines, but working class girls know that the reverse is true. The perpetuation of discriminatory practices made the working class girls in Luttrell’s (1997) study doubt their own worth, deny their value to society, and silence their voice. When these young women were put down by teachers and others in authority within the educational system because of their speech,

appearance, clothing, and other factors that reflected their working class background, “they learned to recognize as ‘intelligent’ or ‘valuable’ only the styles, traits, and knowledge possessed by the economically advantaged students.... the women viewed those who possessed such cultural capital as entitled to their superior position” (p. 114). The identity that these women formed of themselves, as unworthy and not as valuable as other people, stayed with them well into their adult lives.

It is hard to separate home and school when looking at the educational success or failure of working class children. There are “contradictions and anomalies at every turn when we looked at the production of working class educational success” (Lucey, et al., 2003, p. 289). A common theme in the stories of the working class women who have successfully navigated the educational system, are themes of independence, seeing themselves as strong women and a desire to escape from the struggles of their parents’ lives. Even with these characteristics, there is an expectation placed upon them by the school systems that they aren’t going to succeed, and there is an absence of information available to them about higher education (Lucey, et al., 2003; Luttrell, 1997).

Working class identity is not something that goes away as a result of education; it is, in a sense, embodied within a person and reinforced through such things as stereotyping (Ali, 2003). “Stereotyping was ... mentioned frequently, whether in relation to teaching materials or in pupil/teacher interactions.... common stereotypes for girls arise from the discourses of appropriate femininities for adult women and are predicated on raced and classed differences” (p. 274). Such an example of class stereotyping would be ‘unladylike’ behavior (loudness, naughtiness) disrespectfully designated as working class.

If there is one thing that lies at the center of The American Dream, it is the promise of class mobility – the poor can become rich, the rich can become poor. All face an equal possibility of success or failure. According to this promise, differences between people are not a result of class barriers (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005). This assurance of class mobility is often different from the reality of the daily work- life experiences of working class women.

The effect of work experiences on identity.

A woman's social class of origin has long-term effects on the rest of her life. Johnson (2002) found that the social class origins of the women in her study (both middle class and working class women) not only profoundly influenced their childhoods, but also impacted their adult lives:

With few exceptions, the daughters of working-class men worked in working-class jobs, were married to working-class husbands, and lived in working-class neighborhoods. Not a single daughter of an unskilled manual worker had attended college and about two in every three worked in unskilled, low paid jobs. A handful of working class daughters had moved into the middle class, enter professions and marrying professional men, but they were all daughters of foreman, self-employed men, or supervisors – men in the upper ranks of the working class. (p. 19)

A life experience that many working class women share is that of a job. Many women of working class origin work outside of the home – even if they were raised to believe that they wouldn't need to do so. Dominant culture has historically viewed the job patterns of working class women as inconsistent – in the sense that the jobs they hold are often not progressive in terms of income, responsibility or status (Dabrowski, 1983).

“The credentials for entry into shopfloor culture proper...are far from being merely one of the defeated. They are credentials of skill, dexterity and confidence and, above all, a kind of presence which adds to more than it subtracts from, a living social force” (Willis, 1977, p. 52). Another main theme of the “shopfloor culture” is an attempt to gain control of the work process – as well as the importance of the group, the informal group in the everyday work lives of the employees (Westwood, 1986; Willis, 1977). “It is the massive presence of this informal organisation which most decisively marks off shopfloor culture from middle class cultures of work” (Willis, 1977, p. 54). By exchanging knowledge and skills, working class individuals learn to use their differences as group resources – expanding their network of learning and assets as opposed to a more formalized workplace learning structure. Nesbitt (2006) identifies this as a working class learning style; different from and independent of formal education, focusing on informal networks in the workplace, in part because it is shared and harmonious.

It is no secret that women in the workplace experience a “glass ceiling” – an invisible barrier through which women can see the upper echelon of the corporation, but they just can’t reach it. However, working class women often work in the lowest levels of an organization, the basement of a company. These women are faced with a “class ceiling.” Whereas a glass ceiling is invisible, a class ceiling is “structured with harsh unbreakable materials, the kind of materials that can only be chipped at, materials that obscure the light, leaving only an odd chink filtering through here and there” (Brine & Waller, 2004, p. 99).

Although the informal network and learning culture of the ‘shopfloor’ are strong and a positive force for the employees who work there, without marketable skills and without an education, the women may be caught in the lowest levels of the organizations, at the lowest end of the pay scales. They may be dependent upon spouses or significant others or family members

or government/agencies for help. If they do decide to further their education to better themselves as adults, they not only face the challenges of balancing school and family responsibilities, and financial loss – of the cost of the education and any lost wages, but they also face the potential disruption to relationships, a disruption that can cause a crisis of identity.

Women who are managers in an organization also contend with expected values and behaviors as a result of the role they play within that organization. I now turn to a brief discussion of women as managers.

Women as Managers

Women who are managers are part of the workforce and therefore have many concerns in common with other women in the workforce; concerns such as balancing their job and family life, stress (both job related and life related), and equality in pay and opportunity. However, women managers are a distinct group within the female labor force, as well as within the managerial ranks. As such, they have expectations placed upon them, values with which they grapple and concerns unique to them: unique concerns such as perceived inferiorities in style and substance, negative stereotypes relating to women managers, and specific concerns negotiating organizational cultures and power structures (Bierema, 1999b; Bierema, 1996a, 1999a; Boot & Tanton, 1997; Fagenson, 1993; Northcraft & Gutek, 1993; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993; Poole, Nielsen, Horrigan, & Langan-Fox, 1998; Powell, 2002).

Work-life balance

Many working women have difficulties in finding a balance between their jobs and the demands of their families, women managers have the added stress that the trouble in balancing life and work responsibilities may likely interfere with their careers. As an example, struggles between job and family responsibilities can produce tension which carries over to the job, can

lead to feelings of guilt on the part of the woman, or cause feelings of jealousy on the part of the spouse/significant other. These warring arenas may lead the manager to restrict her time and energy at work, which serves to reinforce gender stereotypes on the organizational level – and eventually may impact her career. Conversely, too much time and energy spent on career can influence the decisions that the women make regarding their health and wellness, impact their decisions regarding marriage/parenthood/relationships with significant others, and affect the quality of their interpersonal relationships (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993).

Women in managerial type positions may face “should” messages from family and friends, as well as others in the business world; messages concerned with what it means to be a “good mother.” In a study of women business owners, Fenwick (2002) found that all of the managers who were mothers experienced guilt, however their responses differed: some tried to meet all demands placed on them; some were resentful of the inequitable division of domestic labor and child care; and some worked through the guilt. Fenwick describes the dilemma these women business leaders face as:

...an irony of struggling to establish her credibility and right to be treated like a man ‘in a man’s world’ - her description while being torn by traditional role expectations at home...while presenting a non-traditional gender working model. (p. 174)

Style and substance

Although the job performance of women who are managers is usually equal to or better than that of their male colleagues, the women are paid less – and those differences in pay usually increase, not decrease over time (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993). Women also face a stereotype that they have a different management style from men – and the men’s style is superior, as well as other negative stereotypes about women as managers including the impact of

emotions, their sexuality, and their inappropriateness for a managerial role (Northcraft & Gutek, 1993). “The impact of gender stereotypes on the perception of leadership by others (both men and women) can still be observed” (Sczesny, 2003, p. 361).

Despite an increase in both the numbers and relative proportion of managers who are women in the last 25 years, men and women still view good management styles as those possessing predominantly male characteristics (Chambers, 2000; Kolb, 1999; Powell, 2002; Sczesny, 2003); “powerful forces serve to perpetuate existing stereotypes” (Powell, 2002, p. 188). We may believe that our society has come far in this area, that discrimination and stereotypes are disappearing, but this is not necessarily the case (Chambers, 2000).

The continuation of these stereotypes can hinder women from wanting to become managers, act as a deterrent for organizations in recruiting and selecting women into managerial roles, and serve as strong influences upon women managers to act in ways that may be contrary to the expectations they have of themselves in that role (Boot & Tanton, 1997; Powell, 2002). In fact, women managers who do not share these attributes may experience roadblocks to their career success; roadblocks caused in part by the stress of not meeting those expectations (Offermann & Armitage, 1993).

Women in managerial and leadership roles may not subscribe to traditionally masculine leadership characteristics of separation, being in control, and independence (Boot & Tanton, 1997); instead opting for more inclusive styles such as collaboration, empowering subordinates, and including others to build consensus (Tobin, 2004). Women who exhibit these characteristics (which may in fact make them good managers), may be excluded from opportunities as a result (Offermann & Armitage, 1993).

Even if people are reluctant to overtly state that characteristics of good managers are gender related, it is still true that supervisory and managerial authority is gendered. Managers are expected to be at work for extended periods of time in order to deal with workplace problems that can arise throughout day or evening and to show loyalty and commitment to an organization (Maume, 2004). This is more difficult for women managers who carry more of a burden in terms of domestic responsibility – and this translates into a reluctance to hire them into managerial roles because of their perceived inability to work the long hours required of them as managers (Maume, 2004; Offermann & Armitage, 1993; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993).

Negative stereotypes regarding women as managers

Prejudicial thought against women in a leadership role is particularly prevalent because of a perceived incongruence between their gender role and a leadership role (Sczesny, 2003). Recruitment and selection procedures for managers often screen out women who may not fit the mold of a traditional manager. “It is the taken for granted assumptions emanating from a male heritage of landed gentry and warriorship which still form the background of systems of recruitment and selection practices in organizations” (Boot & Tanton, 1997, p. 131). Stereotypical characteristics such as emotionality, sensitivity and dependency which are often associated with women are considered to be adverse to an effective manager (Sczesny, 2003; Tobin, 2004).

Conversely, when women are successful as managers, they are often perceived to have negative characteristics as well; described as harsh, self-centered, confrontational and power hungry (Offermann & Armitage, 1993). In fact, “female emulation of masculine behaviors can have a negative effect on subsequent evaluations as leaders” (Kolb, 199, p. 318).

Additionally, male colleagues may not be familiar with working with women as managerial peers:

Men are not accustomed to, women executives and therefore they tend to relate to a female peer in the same way they would relate to their wives, and so besides trying to do your work, you're also educating them on how to relate to you as a business peer.

(Anonymous, cited in Bierema, 1999b, p. 780)

Because of these stereotypes that persist regarding women as managers, and the fact that the expectations for managers continue to differ along the lines of gender, "women must work harder and longer than men to achieve executive positions" (Bierema, 1999b, p. 779). And when they fail, it is much more of a noteworthy event within the organization, than when male managers fail. She is perceived as weak and lacking: "Now if a man doesn't make it, it doesn't matter ...but if you have one woman who's a director and she doesn't make it, she was weak" (p. 781). This fear of being perceived as weak can lead to a fear of attributing situations to sex discrimination or harassment – a fear of damaging their careers or even their positions (Bierema, 1999a). Such discrimination can lead to career roadblocks and denied access to networks within the organization that might provide direction and support (Offermann & Armitage, 1993), and ultimately contributes to the continuation of current power structures within those organizations.

Negotiating power and culture

Placing someone in a managerial position is an acknowledgement that he or she can be trusted to manage an aspect of the company consistent with corporate expectations. When managerial roles involve control over a company's financial and human resources (thus directly affecting its future profitability), those in power in the company prefer to promote candidates who are socially similar to themselves (Maume, 2004).

Women who are in managerial positions without direct line responsibility are often perceived to be in positions of lesser authority. They may find themselves with fewer opportunities to move to higher organizational levels with greater power. Being in these less visible or crucial positions may give them less access to those within the organization who have power, thus giving them less influence upon those in higher positions on the organizational chart. This also translates into less influence and less respect from their subordinates who see that she does not have the access to resources and the power or authority to make things happen as other, more powerful managers – who often are men (Offermann & Armitage, 1993).

It may be harder for women to learn the rules of an organization's culture resulting in feelings of isolation and ultimately failure in their managerial position if they do not learn how to navigate through the system. Women managers identify the need to become competent in "office politics" and do not always consider themselves to be effectual with these skills: recognizing the need for an "understanding of the culture of an organization and the skills necessary to function within the culture..." (Poole, et. al, 1998, p. 104).

Women who find safe havens to share and vent with other women who can provide support and guidance may ultimately be more successful in their managerial roles. Through relationships with other women, executive women can become informed about their company's culture. These relationships help the women learn to flourish within their organization's culture. Learning from each other, they can negotiate through and mitigate a male dominated culture (Bierema, 1996). Of course, men as well as women may have trouble learning to navigate through an organization's culture, but women are at a disadvantage in this area as they did not create the culture, nor are they in control of it (Bierema, 1999a).

The most successful women managers are the most reflective and collaborative – spending a great deal of time in strengthening and building relationships, networking to advocate and actively seek change in their organizations. In this stage of executive women’s development women realize that at times the culture itself is a problem as they attempt to focus on changing the environment (Bierema, 1999b).

Women who are managers face problems with work and life dilemmas, perceived inadequacies, power relations and feeling at odds with or unsupported by the organization’s culture. However, when women who come from working class background become managers, the problems facing most women managers can be intensified because of the strength of their emotions and cultural ties to their working class roots. A cultural identity conflict may result.

Cultural Identity Conflict

Social, corporate and organizational forces, in conjunction with women’s interpretation of those forces and the experiences that happen to them contribute to shifting identities. Positive and negative experiences of their interactions with others and social institutions (such as work environments) are strong influences on women’s identity. A woman’s individual identity development is tied to these experiences and to the unique, perhaps even symbolic interpretations she makes of these experiences. As women grow and develop throughout their adulthood and lives, identities change as a result of successes and failures, growth and loss (Flannery, 2000). At times circumstances arise or they find themselves in situations where their notion of who they are, the roles they play, and the identities they hold may be in conflict.

Emotions and class identity

Emotions and class identities are connected. The term ‘structures of feelings’ describes this connection between emotions and class identity. Structures of feelings are joint “ways of

thinking and feeling which, displaying a patterned regularity, form and are formed by the ‘whole way of life’ which comprises the ‘lived culture’ of a particular epoch, class or group” (Bennett, cited in Nenga, 2003, p. 170). The social and material resources available to members of the working class shape their everyday life and culture, which in turn shapes their daily life experiences – to which people respond emotionally. These experience-generated emotional responses are shared by the members of the social class (e.g. the working class), producing structures of feelings.

In a study with women academics of both working class and middle class backgrounds, Nenga (2003) found that the women did share structures of feelings arising from childhood experiences. The experiences generated different types of emotional reactions, and those reactions were similar within a class. The author concluded that emotions of childhood memories, reflective of and shared by others in the same social class, were of such a depth and magnitude that they affected the women into adulthood – affecting their current choices of behaviors, their values, and their self assessment and worth, and their beliefs. She indicated that these shared emotional experiences may help explain why academics, professionals, etc, who came from the working class but are now arguably living a middle class existence, can still feel working class. Nenga speculated, “working class academics may feel that the emotions they carry with them from childhood experiences are so powerful that they weigh equally with adult class experiences.” (p. 197) Working class women who become managers may carry childhood emotions into adulthood as well – emotions that will affect them in their managerial roles.

Working class women becoming managers

The working class way of looking at things is grounded in practical knowledge; grounded in “common sense” (Luttrell, 1987, 1997). The result is that the working class adult values what

one does or produces as opposed to what one thinks (Frye, et al, 2005; Luttrell, 1987; Willis, 1977). Members of the working class may disrespect managers and may not always have faith in their competence (Bratton, 2001; Howell, et al, 2002; Westwood, 1984; Willis, 1977); managers who might not have that same “common sense,” but instead be “school smart” (Luttrell, 1997). This may create a tension in the working class woman who may now find herself questioning her identity when she is in a managerial role.

Just as working class women who enter higher education in an attempt to better themselves often believe they are not supposed to be there, working class women who enter a management role may also feel as if they are imposters. It is possible for tension to develop between the corporation’s expectations of behavior and an individual’s own values and beliefs – values and beliefs that may be longstanding and resulting from culture and experience. A person’s gender and social class are important sources of her values, beliefs, individualism and identity. However one of the purposes of the corporate culture is to assimilate employees into appropriate role expectations, organizational values and a reproduction of the power relationships in society (where such aspects of diversity as gender and class may be repressed). An identity conflict may result (Ogbor, 2001).

A woman’s social class in her childhood affects the rest of her life, influencing her childhood and impacting her adult life (Johnson, 2002). Learning from other women in their families and community, working class girls come to understand what it is expected of a working class woman and mother, and the importance of “common sense” (Luttrell, 1987; McRobbie, 1978; Rubin, 1976). They learn from and rely on each other, forming their own formal and informal social networks. These networks are seen as alternatives to more bureaucratic ones that might be hierarchical, competitive, and individualistic (Zandy, 1993). This reliance on others and

a collaborative learning style are not necessarily representative of expectations of a manager in an organization's culture. This may result in a conflict in expectations the working class women has for herself and for others.

One's identity is tied to significant others in her life and social context. Therefore, identity development requires that others legitimize one's personal identity –the significant others within a past group, a current group or future group of individuals who matter to her. “Society, or more narrowly, the social group must affirm the individual as an accepted member of a particular group in order for a desired social identity to be congruent with a personal identity” (Kaufman, 2003, p. 483). In other words, in order to be accepted by family, school peers, work culture, or any other social group (irrespective of their class), the members of that group need to affirm the individual to be acceptable to be a member of the group. In order to remain acceptable (or become acceptable), an individual may need to explain, defend, account for, or rationalize past or present behaviors that may seem to be inconsistent with what is acceptable to the group (Kaufman, 2003).

Working class girls often grow up in families with strong maternal role models and an ingrained sense that marriage and motherhood are the primary callings for them as adults (Edwards, 2004; Johnson, 2002; Luttrell, 1987; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1976). Corporate expectations call for commitment to the organization, to the business world and create an environment where “extensive involvements in family activities can have a debilitating effect on women managers' career achievements” (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993, p. 198).

Women who come from working class backgrounds have been socialized into the values, expectations, beliefs, and familiar roles of working class life and culture. Those values, expectations, beliefs and roles may be different than ones expected of a manager by an

organization. These potential internal struggles can be said to represent a struggle between the power of the working class culture and the power of the expectations of the organizational culture – a power struggle resulting from leaving one set of cultural expectations and entering another.

Crossing the Border

Flannery (2000) discusses a concept called “border crossings” – essentially where two cultures meet, an intersection where a woman might struggle with the prospect of leaving behind one culture, or parts of it and embracing another culture. Because a person’s identities are formed, in part by her culture, these places of intersecting cultures would have an impact on her identities. Although specifically referring to culture in that writing, the argument can be made that this place of intersection, this meeting place of conflict and struggle occurs for women who are faced with leaving one’s social class and entering into a role generally associated with another, a role such as a manager.

Class identity is easier to obscure and deny than gender and race identity. If you are born into the working class and are willing to change your speech, your gestures, your appearance – in essence to deny the culture of your home and the working class self of your childhood – then you might ‘pass’ as a member of the dominant culture. But you will never belong there. (Zandy, 1993, p. 2)

This idea of “escape” from the working class way of life is a dream that is at times shared by the women and their parents’ – sometimes the parents specifically articulate a wish for their children to have better lives than they do (Lucey, et. al., 2003; Rubin, 1994). In these cases, the mothers and fathers of these women do not want their children to have to do the same kinds of work they are doing. They encourage education as an entry pathway to a better life – a

professional or managerial lifestyle. The message though, is “don’t be like me” – and the underlying ambivalence this creates for the women attempting to better themselves generates ongoing conflicting emotions. To want to be something different, something better than their parents implies that there is something wrong with their life, and subsequently with them. This not only creates ambivalence, but shame.

When women from working class backgrounds do cross that border they face conflicts between the expectations placed on them by their organization and the issues they face from their families. They become disillusioned, experience a sense of isolation and even alienation because they felt they aren’t fully accepted into the academy, nor do their families understand them. They described themselves as “straddlers” and “in limbo” (Richardson, Lawrence-Brown, & Paige, 2004).

Some working class women believe they will not ever feel comfortable in a competitive organizational context. “Socialization, at least within the [working class] family, was into collective and community-based understandings of the social world, not the competitive individualism we now face in which social networks are about instrumentalism, not connection” (Reay, 1997, p. 21). Reay goes on to talk about the dilemma she faces as a working class academic – and the guilt with which she struggles. When she succeeds as an academic, by acknowledging and utilizing middle class knowledge and approaches, she is at the same time drawing attention to those who remain in the working class.

In some ways, crossing the border from working class to a manager position may be a similar form of alienation, albeit self-imposed (Hey, 2003). In place of the support of the family, the community and other women in similar situations, they may face a “competitive individualism” (Reay, 1997, p. 21). Rather than a focus on a tangible product made or a service

provided, attention may be placed on what they think; instead of common sense, they may be expected to use intellectual or learned knowledge (Frye, et. al, 2005).

Women who have made similar moves from their working class origins tell in their stories that the border crossings have certainly been positive in terms of increased income, stability, security, material things, and status. But it has not come without a cost. To gain a new class identity by virtue of crossing the border means that in many ways the old identity is lost, or at the least buried. However, Zandy (1995) references her own border crossing as she says of women who have done so: “We are not at home in the bourgeois world; that is our strength. We resist permanent exile as we cross the borders of class differences and make our own places in the world” (pp. 8-9).

Chapter Summary and Conclusions

Critical theory reveals that the expectations and definitions of success are not only created by those in power in the dominant culture, but are also consistently, perhaps even unconsciously, recreated and reproduced. Education plays a crucial role in perpetuating this hegemony and people internalize the expectations placed upon them and the roles they are expected to play. And yet, critical theory alone without the inclusion of (at a minimum) gender, does not adequately address these issues of power, hegemony and social reproduction of dominance. Class identity has both internal and external sources and is socially reproduced. One’s class identity is carried with her throughout her life and affects every aspect of life, including relationships, work experiences and one’s view of self and others.

Definitions of working class in the literature are frequently economic or labor based and often shown in a negative light. Yet, gender and class identities are important parts of a culture and are important parts of a person’s perceptions, emotions and life choices. The identity created

through childhood familial, communal, educational and general life experiences as a girl/woman from a working class background is strong and hard to disregard as she goes through the rest of her life.

Women in managerial roles often find themselves at odds with the corporate culture of patriarchy and perpetuation of the dominant hegemonic thought. They struggle with expectations placed on them by the organizational culture and by others in the work environment – expectations of managerial behavior, loyalties and commitment. The expectations placed upon girls and women from a working class background seem to be at odds in some ways with the expectations placed upon managers in a work environment. For example, women of working class origin will view power through the lenses of their gender, class and race which may indeed be markedly different from the power expectations of the organizational hierarchy and corporate culture. Feelings of ambivalence may arise when those same women of working class origin transition into a role such as a managerial role, and now they are faced with not only abiding by the power structures, rules and regulations set forth by a middle or upper class corporate culture – but need to enforce those rules and expectations with their employees who may very well be of working class origin as well. As a result, a cultural identity conflict may arise.

Some girls long for an escape, something different from the life of their childhood experiences and are able to make those dreams come true. The road to attaining the dream is an emotional and social shift and at times, an estrangement from what they knew before. Other girls from a working class background remain safely within those confines of familial expectations, and don't go on to higher education or to cross the boundary into a higher social class by virtue of education or job position. This motivation to achieve something beyond the class boundaries of their childhood and earlier life experiences of community and school must be generated from

within the girl herself. Such success, should it come, has a price – the pain of separation from a culture and perhaps from family/friends/community and a loss (or at least a shift) of identity (Lucey, et. al, 2003). These losses of belonging, of safety, of identity can “unconsciously constitute a threat to our very survival” (p. 295).

The issue of who crosses the border and who doesn't, why such choices are made or not made, and the consequences of those decisions makes for interesting and fascinating stories. But stories will only be words unless the researcher looks beyond the words to meanings (Luttrell, 1997; Rubin 1994). By doing so, the researcher can give a voice to the people and begin to “understand the sometimes multiple meanings that lie beneath them, to apprehend what motivates the things people say and do, and to uncover the contradictions between the two” (Rubin, 1994, pp. 24-25). As a result of the stories told by working class women:

...we learn that life stories are about self-understandings and social identities; that these life stories are shaped by multiple structures of domination; and that life stories are shaped by the desire for mutual recognition. But there is a fourth, more visionary lesson: that telling life stories can provide impetus and direction for new ways of being and acting in the world. (Luttrell, 1987, p. 119)

The research on women from working class origins who cross the border into the middle class primarily has been conducted on women in the academy. There is little to no research on women who come from working class backgrounds and become managers in the workplace. What is the impact of this on their identity as working class women? It would seem that the impact would be similar to the impact on women in the academy: feelings of impostership, of guilt, of not feeling at home either in their managerial role in the workplace or in their working class environment.

Researchers, academicians and practitioners need to understand how these working class women interpret their behavior, the symbolism behind the meanings/behind the behaviors/behind the choices – as well as the way these are experienced in their everyday lives. Right now, researchers only know part of the puzzle, but through stories of other working class women, specifically ones who have crossed that border, a full picture can begin to emerge.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research techniques, more specifically, narrative inquiry to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of working class women who have become managers in a health care organization. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the methodology that I used for the study. This chapter will also include a discussion of my background, my plan for participant selection, techniques for data collection and analysis, and a description of the processes that I used to ensure trustworthiness in the study.

Overview of Research Kind and Type

This section details the research methodologies used in my study. In particular, it offers a rationale for the use of a critical narrative analysis within the paradigm of qualitative research for the purposes of hearing and analyzing participants' stories, as well as assisting and encouraging them to identify and address the power issues affecting them. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of divergence relating to gender and class identity for working class women as they learned to become managers in a health care organization.

Research Kind: Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is “intrigued with the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions...qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). The meaning of the things that happen to people, of the experiences they have is socially constructed as they interact with the world (Merriam, 2002). This world that they experience is not fixed or stable, it is ever changing so that the construction of their reality is constantly changing as well (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005;

Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research emphasizes this social construction of reality while looking at the personal relationship between the researcher and whatever/whoever is being studied. Researchers who use a qualitative approach to their studies look at people or situations in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of or bring understanding to the experience, using the meanings or interpretations of the people involved in those experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative researchers want to understand the meanings associated with the experiences at a particular point in time and in a particular context (Merriam, 2002). In order to comprehend those meanings, qualitative researchers go directly to the participants for input.

Qualitative methods offer the best possibility for understanding how individuals both make sense of and enact their social (and organizational) worlds...Tests and measurements, while useful for some purposes, do not permit us to ask how individuals and groups make sense of their worlds. Only by observing and communicating with them face to face, can we understand the meaning making apparatuses that individuals bring to, and create from, a dynamic stream of events. Both of those tactics are qualitative methods. (Lincoln, 2005, p. 225)

There are several characteristics of qualitative research. The first is that the primary purpose of the research is to understand how people make sense of the things that have happened to them. In this study, I wanted to know how the women made sense of the experiences they had transitioning from working class origins into a managerial position. Secondly, in qualitative research, the researcher himself or herself is the main instrument for collecting the data – allowing for interaction with the participants in the study to aid in understanding the communication, to clarify or follow up on any confusing aspects of the communication and to check for an accurate understanding of the communicated information. In order to appreciate the

meanings and understandings that the women have realized, I needed to interact with them, following up on their comments and probing deeper into the experiences, emotions and power relations issues that emerged in their stories. Thirdly, the researchers gather the information to build concepts, themes, categories and theories; and finally the outcome of any qualitative study should be descriptive using words or pictures to describe the phenomenon studied (Merriam, 2002). The women's stories emerged as a result of this study; and from those narratives themes and patterns relating to their experiences became apparent.

When studying gender issues in organizations and/or management practices, qualitative research has an advantage over quantitative research as it allows the researcher to investigate further and dig deeper into unexpected issues (Deem, 2002). In a dissertation where the purpose is to hear and analyze participants' stories and assist them to identify power issues through those stories, it is appropriate to use a research method that uses observation and communication in a face to face situation in order to understand these events.

Qualitative research crosses many disciplines, includes many research methods and encompasses many formats for its findings and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). For example, in this study, I was interested in how social and political aspects of the participants' situations, including the power differentials that are implied in those aspects, shaped their reality of the experiences that happened to them. This critical qualitative approach allowed me to integrate an emancipatory agenda into my analysis in order to help the participants recognize the effect these power differentials had on them, as well as analyze the data collected (Merriam, 2002). The stories the women told provided rich and detailed data from which these social and political aspects emerged. In order to formulate findings from and interpretations of this data, I used narrative analysis.

Research Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research that is concerned with peoples' stories – specifically, their life experiences and the emotions accompanying those experiences (Chase, 2005). People's lives are compiled of stories lived and told in social situations. All people are storytellers (Lincoln, 2000). Narratives provide a good way to understand their experiences (Richardson, 1990). Stories shape identities as they provide structure regarding one's perception of reality and provide “rich data for understanding interpersonal interaction, individual bias, social expectations and cultural values” (Horrocks & Callahan, 2006, p. 72). For example, Richardson (1990) states:

Narrative displays the goals and intentions of human actors; it makes individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes; it humanizes time; and it allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions, and to alter the directions of our lives. (p. 117)

In a sense, a narrative is told from the point of view of the one telling the story, her story – and it has a beginning, a middle and an end (Elliott, 2005; Merriam, 2002). But in telling the stories, time becomes an enhanced awareness of past events and a situation of future experiences into the present; in so doing, people organize and understand their lives in created ways to explain and justify those events and experiences (Richardson, 1990). These stories offer the listener the opportunity to view cultural and social meanings through a “translucent window” (Patton, 2002). As the listener, I had an opportunity to view the stories through this window and analyze the cultural and social meanings of the stories, looking for themes and patterns to emerge. Of particular interest was coming to understand how the women's experiences were explained and justified as they reflected back upon them.

According to Bloom (2002), there are three goals that frame a narrative research approach. Firstly, narrative inquiry will use a person's individual life as the principal source of data. Secondly, narrative inquiry uses stories of the 'self' as the starting point from which the researcher can generate critiques of societal pressures or values and advocate for change. By carefully interpreting the stories, the researcher can show how the dogma and power relations of the dominant society are sustained, replicated or challenged. When viewed through an emancipatory lens, the researcher can formulate a social critique and advocate for social change at the individual or group level. Thirdly, this type of research is interested in deconstructing the 'self' as a "humanist conception, allowing for nonunitary conceptions of the self" (p. 310) – meaning to encourage an openness to new ways of understanding the world, and new ways of understanding and reflecting upon ourselves (Bloom, 1998). This third point is particularly important in research that looked at social and political power differentials in the stories told by the women in the study. Women have had a long history of being marginalized and oppressed by patriarchy, and of being physically and psychologically abused by those in power. This has led many women over time to internalize pessimistic and ambivalent thoughts about what it means to be a woman (Bloom, 1998).

Narratives can be in oral or written form and can be gathered in various ways: during interviews, during conversations or during qualitative fieldwork such as observations. Regardless of how narratives are collected, they can take the form of a short story about a certain event or situation; an extended story about a particular experience or experiences that had a particular impact upon the participant or are relevant to the topic or question raised; or the complete story of the participant's life (Chase, 2005). In whatever form a narrative takes, it reveals patterns of culture and societal structures or expectations as seen through the eyes of the individual and thus

that individual's perspective (Patton, 2002). Because stories are often emotional and symbolic, they can augment specifics and provide deeper meanings for the details offered (Horrocks & Callahan, 2006).

Stories about a woman's culture, class, occupation, etc. can affect her self-confidence, her goals and the choices she makes. As such, these stories aren't just tales, but become narratives that have consequences for the women, their communities, and their organizations (Richardson, 1990). By careful interpretation of the narratives, the researcher can show how different ideologies and relationships of power from the dominant culture are continued, duplicated or overthrown. "Social and generational cohesion, as well as social change, depend upon this ability to empathize with the life stories of others" (Richardson, 1990, p. 127).

A narrative researcher needs to be conscious then of both the individual participant and the influences of society and culture on how she experiences and lives her life (Bloom, 2002). In this study, in order to maintain that level of consciousness, I used a critical feminist perspective.

Narrative Research: Using a Critical Feminist Perspective

This narrative study utilized both feminist *and* critical theory lenses to establish and conduct the research as well as analyze the data. By using a critical feminist lens to interpret the stories, I was able to understand how the women have learned to navigate the power relationships in their management experiences.

Critical theory

"The defining feature of critical research is that it critiques and challenges unequal distributions of power within social, economic and political systems" (Sandlin, 2002). By situating the study within wider social structures, the researcher becomes involved in an

investigation and critique of those systems of power with the intent of exposing them and identifying them for the systems of patriarchy and domination they are.

Critical theory presumes that conflict between socio-economic classes plays a central role in understanding the structures of society. Since the participants in this study were women from a working class background, and a struggle with class identity was assumed to exist as a result of the participants moving into a managerial role, it was appropriate to use critical theory and feminist lenses (a critical feminist lens) in establishing the study and interpreting the stories. I wanted to see both the gender perspective and the class perspective manifest in these experiences (Patton, 2002).

Critical feminist perspective

A feminist perspective to the study assumed the importance of gender in relationships and societal structures and oriented the research study accordingly. There is also a connection between research and action, encouraging participants toward personal and social change (Richardson, 1990). Because this was a critical feminist study, one of its intended outcomes was to explore the impact of dogma and power on the women's experiences of becoming managers. This was detailed in my third research question as discussed in Chapter One. It was my intention that as a result of their participation in the study, the women who told their stories would come to a greater understanding of the effect the various social and political forces have had on the choices they have made and the consequences of those choices.

One of the ways this was accomplished was to have them read quotes revealing the thoughts of others regarding the impact of hegemony and power on the lives of working class women. The women in the study read and reflected upon these quotes between the first and second interviews and discussed their reactions to them in the second interview. Some of the

women understood the impact upon their lives; in “aha” moments, they were able to articulate how class related expectations impacted them or continue to impact their behaviors and feelings (related to “fitting in” for example). Others indicated that they did not agree with the opinions expressed by the quotes; believing that their working class values have not been a hindrance to them or caused them consternation or dismay. However, their stories and the descriptions of their experiences paint a different picture as detailed in their narratives.

Allowing the research participants to tell the stories of their lives and their experiences was also a way to equalize power dynamics in the research relationship, while offering evidence regarding the daily lives of the research participants and the meanings they connect to those life situations (Elliott, 2005).

This equalizing of power between researcher and the research participants is a central tenet in using a feminist ideological perspective in determining the focus of the study. In feminist research it is not only important that the researcher be sensitive to power relations between her and the participants, but also that they benefit from the study and that their experience is valued. As indicated previously in this chapter, that is one of my intentions with this dissertation.

According to Patton (2002), a feminist perspective to a research study may include the following principles:

A sense of connectedness and equality between researcher and researched; explicitly acknowledging and valuing ‘women’s ways of knowing’ ...; participatory processes that support consciousness-raising and researcher reflexivity; and going beyond knowledge generation, beyond ‘knowledge for its own sake’ to engage in using knowledge for change... (p. 129).

When analyzing the women's stories, it was important to look not only at the content of the stories (the words, phrases, descriptions), but also to look at the way the story was structured. By looking at the way the story is structured, the researcher can look at the way the woman represented herself in the story; the way she understands and makes meaning of what happens to her through gendered eyes and ways of knowing. In a sense, the researcher using narrative inquiry creates an interpretation of the story, by looking at the ways in which the story is told, not just the story itself (Bloom, 2002). The words and phrases that people use and the concepts that set up the structures of their stories carry hidden messages of hegemonic thoughts and values determining who or what people think is important. Feminist inquiry attempts to identify these hidden messages and bring them to consciousness as a step toward change and empowerment of the researcher and participants. Moreover, feminist inquiry as a methodological perspective emphasizes participation, collaboration, change and empowerment (Patton, 2002). My study put emphasis on all of these areas.

The choice of a critical feminist perspective for this research was directly related to the background of the researcher.

Background of the Researcher

My background as a critical feminist motivates me to tell the stories of the women who participated in my research study. It is a way that I can give voice to a group of women who have been marginalized, who have been silenced by a dominant patriarchal society. I present their stories (Richardson, 1990) in an intentional effort to raise their consciousnesses, encouraging them to address issues of power and patriarchy that have come forth as a result of their stories.

I am a white woman, from working class roots with strong working class loyalties to my family, community and values of origin. Yet, I have acquired middle class socioeconomic privileges and this has also impacted the way I view the world.

My experiences with the education system that devalued my class upbringing, and encouraged gender and class stereotypical career choices; as well as my extended family's expectations that I would stay in the area in which I grew up and work in a factory or in a service job, are memories that resurface from time to time. The feelings of impostership and the self doubts that I have when faced with uncomfortable situations as a manager, particularly those that are atypical of my earlier expectations of how "women ought to behave," remind me that I have few familial role models on which to base my behaviors. The fence I walk when revisiting family members in my home town and am faced with the innumerable questions about my doctoral program such as "are you still in school?", "what will you do with that doctor degree anyway?", other questions about my work and lifestyle such as "what do you know, you are a manager?", and "do you ever cook supper or clean your house?" make me realize that I too face ambivalence in my identity as a working class woman. The gendered and classed expectations I face within myself – and from my extended family – weigh heavily on my mind at times and can cause emotional interference with the goals I've set or the goals expected of me as a manager.

Growing up working class, the understanding was that control of our lives was in the hands of others: the bosses, the teachers, the government and other voices of authority. It was overtly stated that "they" (meaning the voices of authority, whoever they might be in the particular context under discussion) knew nothing about real life; they had "no common sense." Additionally, within my extended family (with the notable exception of my grandfather, a teacher), higher education was a means to an end – especially for girls. Although I was

encouraged to attend college (a local branch campus of a state university or the area's community college), it was to have the skills to "fall back on" should I ever need to work (meaning if my future husband wasn't able to provide for me as a good working class husband should). I distinctly remember my father sharing with me his disdain for those who attained a B.S., M.S. or PhD (with clear vernacular terms used to identify the initials) – and that those people (again) had "no common sense."

When I became a supervisor and then a manager, I struggled with the expectations within myself and those overtly stated on a periodic basis by my extended family members regarding my abilities, my styles of supervision and my knowledge of "real work" – work that required "getting your hands dirty." I was now supervising people who came from backgrounds like mine and was struggling to balance gendered working class expectations and the expectations of my organization upon me as a manager: expectations such as enforcing policies and procedures that didn't always make sense, putting the good of the organization above the good of an individual, and maintaining a union free status (or representing the manager point of view when dealing with the employees' representatives).

The gendered expectations from my working class upbringing such as the total responsibility for domestic chores, making sure my husband was the dominant voice of power in the family, and being all I could be for my children (the primary role expected of me) created added pressure when combined with the time expectations of a manager. And being under greater scrutiny as a woman manager to make sure that responsibilities were carried out, the time required for accomplishment of those tasks was great.

All of these conflicting expectations from within myself as well as those overtly or covertly stated by others who mattered in my life created a series of conflicts within me.

Because of these conflicts, that still continue at times, it was important to me to give voice to other women who have come from similar backgrounds and have gone into similar roles in the workplace.

My association with gendered working class values and attitudes, my shared understanding of class expectations and my familiarity with what I believed would be common sets of experiences, along with my critical feminist perspective on life led me to look at this research topic. It was out of my own personal need and desire to have a better understanding of such experiences, the conflicts and issues that arise as a result, and the emotions that accompany them that this dissertation came to fruition.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling is a participant selection technique that involves the deliberate selection of cases which are rich in information from which data can be gleaned (Kuzel, 1999; Patton, 2002; Wolff, 2002). A purposeful sample was selected for this study to gather information and learn much about the issues relative to its purpose. My intent in the study was to study participants' situations to bring forth insights and deeper understanding (Patton, 2002) to the issues and ambivalence involved when working class women become managers – my intent was not to yield empirical generalizations. Since I wanted to learn the most about this topic, I turned to those who know the most about it; thus I used a purposeful sample (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

There are many different ways to determine a purposeful sample; I used a combination of criterion sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling. In criterion sampling, only participants who met a predetermined set of parameters were chosen to participate in the study.

In this way, only cases that are “information rich” (Patton, 2002, p. 238) were used, and quality data was assured (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In addition, I used participants meeting the pre-established criteria who currently or previously worked at a local health care system (convenience sampling). As I was known to these participants, their familiarity with me and the level of trust that I have already developed with them assisted me in attaining the most useful information, given the limited number of cases studied (Patton, 2002). In addition, involving the participants known to me allowed me to utilize an insider’s perspective, using the participants in a collaborative approach to my research. This was in keeping with my feminist approach to the research, as “collaborative principles of feminist inquiry include connectedness and equality between researchers and researched, participatory processes that support consciousness raising and researcher reflexivity, and knowledge generation that contributes to women’s liberation and emancipation” (Patton, 2002, p. 269).

Criteria for inclusion in the study were:

1. Be a woman;
2. Come from a working class background (family of origin) – as self identified by adults in family of origin who were laborers, service workers, retail or wait staff (relating to the definition of working class in chapter one of this dissertation); and
3. Have worked in a managerial position in a health care organization for a minimum of three years, accept the purpose of this study, and be willing to tell her story about becoming a manager.

I chose a health care organization as the context for the study as it provides rich illustrations of women who have been promoted to manager positions from service, technical or

direct care positions. In addition, the managers who fit the criteria already had a working relationship with me and thus a trust and rapport that encouraged honest and heartfelt stories about their experiences in transitioning from a working class background into a manager position.

Snowball sampling, also known as chain sampling is a way to attain information from key sources, who can then recommend other people whose experiences may also fit the required criteria for the study (Patton, 2002). By asking a few people whose backgrounds I suspected may fit the criterion of my study, finding them to be a good fit, and then asking them to recommend other people with whom I might speak, I increased the probability that confirming cases will be found. In this way, information-rich cases can be found because participants already involved referred others like them, allowing the study to reach a point of redundancy or saturation (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Researchers using a critical lens to conduct their research need to ensure that the samples strategies chosen are appropriate and adequate (Kuzel, 1999). I have argued for the appropriateness of criterion based, snowball sampling and convenient sampling strategies in the previous paragraphs. In terms of an adequate sample size, I utilized nine participants as qualitative research usually focuses in-depth on small samples (Kuzel, 1999). All of the women in the study were Caucasian.

I approached a few female managers in the health care organization personally that I knew or strongly suspected had the types of experiences and background fitting my criterion. After explaining the criterion for my study, I asked them to tell me if they fit the definition of working class as described and requested them to meet with me privately for details of the study. Once I explained the criteria and they either agreed or declined to participate, I asked them to

recommend others in the system that might fit the criteria and to whom I might talk about also participating in my study.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection consisted of three sources: in-depth conversational interviews, observation, and a post story collection group discussion. In addition, I kept a written journal in which to document my thoughts, feelings or memories that may inform or have an impact on the study.

Conversational interviews

The women, who volunteered as outlined above and met the criterion for the study, participated in two conversational interviews that were held approximately 8 to 12 weeks apart. A conversational interview allows for dialogue aimed “toward encouraging expression, elucidation, and disclosure of the experience being investigated....Dialogue involves cooperative sharing” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47).

Because dialogue cannot be planned in advance (Moustakas, 1990), interview questions for the first interview were not be formulated ahead of time, however clarification questions and encouraging comments were used to elicit more details, and allow for deeper reflection on the part of the narrator.. These techniques allowed me to investigate deeply into the issues chosen for the study as they focused on specific research topics, are personal and intimate, are designed to provide detail and nuance, and have as a goal the generation of stories (Miller & Crabtree, 1999a).

By using open-ended and clarification questions, I hoped to draw out stories and experiences – using my role as the researcher to make possible conversations that will “facilitate improvisational story-telling” (Miller & Crabtree, 1999a, p. 101).

The goal of the interview sessions was to allow the participant to hold “the floor for a lengthy turn in the interview conversation and [be] interrupted only for clarification” (Riessman, 1997, p. 156). I asked questions to clarify or explore areas or topics of interest as they arose. I had general topic areas that I wanted to cover and explore and prepared some sample questions in case the conversation lulled or in case I needed to ask clarifying or even challenging questions. I was able to facilitate conversation around specific topics that were germane to my study, but still be able to have a conversation and listen to the stories of the participants, wherever those stories might take me (Patton, 2002). A copy of open ended and general questions used for the first interviews with the participants can be found in the Appendices to the dissertation.

The conversations from the first interview session were transcribed and returned to the women for review, with a follow up session held 6 to 8 weeks later. In the intervening time, the participants were asked to review the transcripts and reflect on issues or conflicting situations they may have faced or still face as a manager – specifically as those conflicting situations related to the values and expectations placed upon them as working class women.

The purpose of interviewing...is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories. (Patton, 2002, p. 341)

Following the first interview session but before the second one, I reviewed the transcripts from the first interview and determined what follow up or probing questions to ask in the second session to explore their experiences in further detail. In an attempt to help the women provide more specific details, I provided them with questions to reflect upon prior to our second

interview. Many of the questions were specific to the women and were designed specifically around quotes from the first interview, such as “tell me a story that will help me understand what you mean by your comment...” Other questions were asked of all of the women in an attempt to have them reflect upon their life as it related to the literature. And finally, in an effort to encourage examples of their experiences relating to power relationships, I had them read a few quotes concerning class identity and power and discuss their reaction to them. A sample of questions given to a participant prior to the second interview can also be found in the Appendices of this dissertation.

It is important to note that the women in the study referred to their narratives as their “stories.” However, the approach I took as the researcher was that the women told me stories of their experiences during our conversational interviews. These stories became their narratives; the narratives are what appear in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Observation

During the conversational sessions, it was important that I use good observation skills, not just good listening skills. According to Patton (2002), it is important in fieldwork to observe activities and interactions between people, as well as the physical surroundings. But in terms of the types of stories that were told, it was important to observe nonverbal expressions, body language, tone of voice and what is not said. It was important to keep accurate field notes regarding these types of communications, just as important as the accurate transcription of the stories themselves.

The use of observation is an important part of any qualitative study – and in interviewing, “observation plays an important role as the researcher notes the interviewee’s body language and affect in addition to her words” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 107). This method of data

collection required the researcher to not only pay attention to the words, but also to the bigger picture during the course of the interview.

Using observation required me to be systematic and deliberate in the recording of such things as setting, behavior, facial expressions, etc. Observation is a valid partner to the use of in-depth interviewing when the assumption is made that behavior is not only purposeful, but also reflective of one's values and beliefs (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Utilizing good observation techniques allowed me to follow up during the course of the interview when the nonverbal expressions or body language were incongruent with the words that were being said.

Additionally, by taking good field notes which also including observations of body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, I was able to follow up in the second interview when questions arose upon my review of those notes. This was especially helpful in developing the questions to assist the participants in their reflections prior to the second conversational interview.

Follow up group discussion and review

Following the completion of the interviews, the participants were invited to a group discussion surrounding the commonalities and differences discovered in the narratives. The group discussion was facilitated by the researcher using a feminist perspective of valuing each person's contribution, of valuing equality between researcher and participants, and by encouraging consciousness-raising or action as a result of the research outcomes being shared with the participants (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 2002).

The group discussion was helpful in checking identified trends or findings resulting from the in-depth interviews. This discussion group encouraged honest, challenging and empowering dialogue among the participants (Brown, 1999). In fact, the women all were very excited about

the group “celebration” and had looked forward to it during the entire study process. During the group discussion, we not only discussed commonalities and differences, we talked about conflicts they faced, struggles they’ve endured and the impact of power on their lives. They also provided me with some practical suggestions for the use of the study’s findings. These suggestions are identified in Chapter Six.

Consent

Prior to collection of data, I obtained consent from both the institution and the participants. Institutional consent was obtained by the appropriate members of the administration of the health care system. Before beginning the study, consent was applied for and received from the Institutional Review Board of The Pennsylvania State University. Once that permission was received, I began to seek my participants as outlined above.

Once I received volunteers, I obtained informed consent from each participant prior to her inclusion in the study. I verbally explained the purpose of my study, the time frame required and the various data collection procedures that I planned to use. Following my verbal explanations, I obtained the written consent of each participant and a copy of that informed consent is included in the appendices of my dissertation. At both the verbal and written consent stages, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions so that they were clearly giving informed consent. A copy of the informed consent was given to each participant, and a copy was be kept by the researcher. Confidentiality was assured and the results of the study were shared with the participants.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected, recorded and transcribed the data, gleaning insights during all aspects of the data collection and analysis process. The purpose of data analysis is to bring order,

set up structures and provide interpretations to the data collected. “Qualitative analysis turns data into findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 432); this involved taking the raw information obtained through the data collection as described above, gleaning the significant from the insignificant, identifying commonalities and differences, and developing a structure to communicate the findings in a meaningful and noteworthy way.

Analyzing narratives should take into account the “signs, symbols, and expression of feelings in language” with the understanding the “researcher is collaboratively constructing the narrator’s reality, not just passively recording and reporting” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 123). The participants did not tell their stories chronologically during the conversational interviews; I needed to pull together pieces of the transcripts of those interviews to create the story in a logical, easy to follow format. In doing this, it was important to keep as true to the original quotes of the participants while editing to make the story coherent and logical to follow. As I reviewed each transcript over and over, the pieces of their stories began to make sense. I pulled together like themes within each transcript, using the coding described below and then drafted the stories and descriptions into what seemed to be an easy to read and easy to follow format.

The women’s narratives were co-constructed by me and the women. I use the term co-constructed to refer to the following process. I transcribed the first interview verbatim and the transcript was reviewed by the participant for accuracy. I transcribed the second interview verbatim and the transcript was reviewed by the participant for accuracy. Following that review, conversations were held between me and the participant (the conversations were held via email, phone and/or in person) to negotiate content, headings and the pseudonym of the participant. After it was drafted, each woman read her narrative, recommended revisions, additions and

deletions and when a participant wanted words or sections rearranged or changed, those revisions were made. Each woman approved the final version of her narrative before it became part of this dissertation. The women's narratives are presented in their entirety in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

In analyzing the narratives provided by the participants in the study, it was important to look at the descriptions of their life experiences as they unfolded over the extent of the conversations (Riessman, 2002). Using the story as the beginning of the analysis, she suggests taking the following approach:

...presentation of and reliance on detailed transcripts and interview excerpts, attention to the structural features of discourse, analysis of the coproduction of narratives through the dialogic exchange between interviewer and participant, and a comparative orientation to interpreting similarities and contrasts among participants' life stories. (Riessman, 2002, p. 698)

Patton (2002) indicates that the beginning of qualitative analysis occurs with the capturing and tracking of analytical insights during the collection of the data. In this way when the data collection is completed and the formal analysis of the data begins, the researcher can draw on the original questions that were developed in the study's design and the insights and initial interpretations arising during the course of the data collection. By keeping track of my insights in a journal following the conversational interviews and as I reviewed the transcripts, I was able to refer to the journal as I created the narratives from the records of the conversations.

By immersing myself in the data, it forced me to become intimately familiar with it and allowing me to find the "core meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453) through reflection upon the various stories, and pulling out themes, events, patterns, categories, quotations and people from

the stories; looking for similarities and uniqueness. These categories, themes or perspectives emerged from reading and re-reading the stories; subtle enough to keep the meanings and variations as indicated by the storytellers, but broad enough to be able to find similarities between the stories as appropriate (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). It was important that the categories, themes and patterns be internally consistent within the stories, and if at all possible be analyzed by using indigenous typologies – language used by the participants themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Patton, 2002). Given that the data relating to the topics was not in the same place in each of the stories, I needed to develop a coding system to find the essential information, to separate the extraneous from the story line, to piece together the chronology and to indicate relevance.

Using colored markers, my own abbreviations/codes and colored sticky notes, I coded the transcripts and stories with a scheme to identify the various categories as outlined above. Commonalities and differences were determined by the researcher from the text, although I entered the analysis anticipating that some general themes identified in the literature would emerge from the scrutiny. My theoretical orientation, the existing literature, the characteristics of the participants and the context of the study all undoubtedly influenced the themes I found (Ryan and Bernard, 2000).

I constantly compared my tentative understandings with the data – returning to the transcripts over and over again to find instances that reinforce and/or challenged those tentative findings. In so doing, I looked for other explanations of these findings that are different from the explanations I offered, reflecting upon them and determining the most plausible justifications for the findings resulting from my analysis of the data. Looking for differences in the stories – examples that don't fit the tentative explanation, “carefully examining deviate cases or data that

don't fit the categories developed" (Patton, 2002, p. 454) – may suggest that there are new investigations to be made (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Riessman (1997) discusses the prospect of organizing narratives by topic, not necessarily by the timing of events, allowing the storyteller to link episodes in her life between settings. In this way, personal narratives can offer the listener the opportunity to peer into the teller's intimate experiences. By collaborating in the telling of the story with the listener, it helps to make sense of the experience. And in the analysis of the narrative, Riessman goes on to say:

Crucial meanings are lost if the form of the telling is ignored, and the text is fragmented and decontextualized into symptom counts and lists. There is reciprocity between form and meaning: the way individuals craft their tales, including the narrative genre they select, carry crucial interpretive understandings. Meanings that allow for the examination of the narrative form – and diverse ways of telling – counter tendencies (all too frequent in social science research) to objectify the subject (p. 157).

I chose a holistic approach to narrative analysis, "seeking to preserve [the] narrative in its entirety and understand it as a complete entity" (Elliott, 2005, p. 38). The narratives of the women in this study are powerful as individual stories of how their backgrounds as working class women have influenced them, and continue to influence them as managers.

I hoped to find the "core meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453), looking for similarities and uniqueness in the women's stories. In qualitative analysis, it is important to look for convergence, i.e. what things fit together, as well as divergence, i.e. examining the information that doesn't quite fit - what Patton (2002) calls "deviant cases" (p. 466). Consequently, I used this approach of convergence and divergence as viewed through a critical feminist lens, to examine the narratives, using the commonalities, nuances, and themes that arose from the

individual stories to show how the “dominant ideologies and power relations in society are maintained, reproduced or subverted” (Bloom, 2002, p. 311).

After ruminating over the stories and looking for commonalities and differences within them, I determined an understanding of the essential qualities and common themes. A further description of those commonalities and differences can be found in Chapter Five. I provided an examination of the narratives utilizing the commonalities, nuances and themes that arose from the individual stories. In keeping with the critical feminist orientation of this study, this examination also included an analysis of the narratives’ commonalities and differences as they related to hegemony and power. This detailed examination and analysis can be found in Chapter Six.

Analyzing narratives involves telling about the experience, not just about the content within the story. It is important to examine why the story was told the way that it was told (Riessman, 2002). It was important not to focus on the categories, but also look at the stories as a whole, taking into account such things as emotions, length and details of a described event and context. People use stories to interpret the past, “the meanings of life events are not fixed or constant; rather they evolve, influenced by subsequent life events” (Riessman, 2002, p. 705). It was necessary to look at how the storyteller situated herself in relation to others in the stories, especially stories through time, as this told a great deal about her perceived identity and any changes in her perception of herself.

When people tell their stories, certain assumptions may be made that the listener shares an understanding of the workings of their world; when that happens, certain, obvious to them details may be left out. Elliott (2005) describes this in her discussion of the concept of genre as “a pattern of narrative and imagery...providing a framework that is culturally shared and ...used

to structure events and experiences so that they are meaningful and easily communicated” (p. 46). It was necessary to listen for what was not said in order to identify cultural/class based assumptions so important to this study (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Otherwise, I might have lost the “richness and depth of the narrative material unless [such] additional information is taken into consideration” (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p. 126). In the end, narrative inquiry is not just the researcher listening to a story, writing it down and throwing in a few comments or insights: “As we engage with research participants and live and tell stories with them, the plotlines under composition are restoried, that is, they are relived and retold” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 165). By looking through the windows that are these personal stories, researchers can get a glimpse of the narrators’ lives as they’ve faced turning points or transitions that have not only changed the meanings of the past experiences they’ve encountered but also have affected their identities (Riessman, 2002).

Verification and Trustworthiness of the Study

It was important to insure the trustworthiness of the study so as to give accurate voice to the women who took the time to share their stories. The quality of any qualitative study is directly connected to the credibility by which it will be perceived; the theoretical framework chosen and the underlying philosophical leanings of the researcher will create the criteria for judging that quality and credibility (Patton, 2002). The criteria that were used to judge the quality and credibility of this study are credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability. I will discuss each of these in more detail.

The credibility of a qualitative study is related to the rigor of the methods chosen, the credibility of the researcher him or herself, and the belief in the value of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). I addressed the issue of credibility in a number of ways. First, I sought alternative

themes and patterns – rival understandings or findings from the ones I developed. I did this by immersing myself in the data over and over again and deliberately looked for data supporting different explanations. If I failed to find strong evidence to support alternative explanations, this helped “increase confidence in the original, principle explanation...generated” (Patton, 2002, p. 553). Secondly, I sought out negative cases – instances where participants’ stories do not reflect the patterns or trends that seem to emerge from the data. Negative cases can be either exceptions to the patterns or may be exceptions that strengthen the patterns altogether. Thirdly, I used method triangulation (2 in-depth interviews, observation and a group de-briefing), member checks where I had the participants themselves review the transcripts of the interviews and also discuss the findings in general form with the de-briefing group, and a peer review. By using triangulation in these ways, I increased the credibility and quality of the study thus “countering the concern that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (Patton, 2002, p.563).

In addition to the rigor of the methods chosen, it is important that the researcher be credible as well. The researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), and his or her credibility will affect how the findings of the study are received. I am a woman from a working class background, who through a combination of education and life experiences/life choices became a manager in a health care organization. I have been a manager in the health care arena for more than 20 years and have worked in an environment very similar to the working environment of the participants for most of that time. Much of that time has been spent in a human resources or human resources development role, so not only am I familiar with the familial background and working environment of the participants, but also am familiar with the types of struggles they deal with on a daily basis. In addition, my experience in human resources,

adult education, and the doctoral program have made me feel very comfortable in listening to people talk, to hone my observational skills, to encourage communication when there is silence, and to facilitate discussion among many people who may be reluctant to talk.

The ability for the results or findings of the study to be confirmed or substantiated by other people is referred to as the study's confirmability. An audit of the study's data and ultimate findings by an outsider is one way to ensure confirmability of the study. An audit trail allows another researcher to confirm the findings of a study by following the "trail" of the researcher. By keeping a research journal that details my reflections, difficulties, and my assessments regarding the data collection and my thoughts and insights as I analyze the data – I provided a detailed explanation of how the data were collected and analyzed (Merriam, 2002). This detailed explanation can be reviewed by another researcher outside of my study.

By examining the data and subsequent findings, a confirmability judgment results, especially if the outside "expert" can look at the information critically and has the capability of distinguishing work that is of high quality (Patton, 2002). I had my data and results looked at by an "outside reader." In addition, other processes that a researcher can use to ensure confirmability include keeping field notes, and using triangulation techniques (Patton, 2002); techniques which I also used.

The audit trail as discussed above is also a way for my decisions to be examined to make sure that my findings are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2002). This examination of the research decisions made by the researcher is a determination of dependability. It is important that a qualitative study's fundamental design and the findings reached follow a logical trail that originates in the data, in this study, the text (Lieblich, et. al., 1998). The design of the research needs to make sense to other researchers. The external reviewer described above was asked to

review materials and data from the transcripts of the interviews in order to see if they made sense. This external review, as well as the use of verbatim transcripts and researcher's notes was used to provide full and rich data, which offered a clear and detailed picture of the participants' stories and experiences. In addition, I kept all records and documentation from the initial proposal stage up through the final dissertation defense, and for the length of time required as a condition for the study by the IRB. In this way, an accurate audit trail is maintained, should any other researcher wish to review my research process and results in order to determine if they were appropriate and the results reasonably determined from the data.

Once a qualitative study has been verified for credibility, confirmability and dependability, it is verified in a fourth way: that: its ability to have the findings generalized or transferred to other populations. Transferability means the extent to which the findings of the study can be generalized to other situations; can the findings from the sample that is used be generalized to a broader portion of the population. It has been said that qualitative research uses a "‘common sense’ view of generalizability ... the reader is left to make up his or her own mind ... how far the evidence collected ... can be transferred to offer information about the same topic in similar situations" (Elliott, 2005, p. 26).

Narrative research provides a glimpse into the storytellers' experiences and the meanings of those experiences to them – and it also provides insight into the cultural guidelines and expectations that help them to make sense of those experiences. Analyzing the narratives of a purposeful sample of participants may or may not be transferable to others within that community culture (Elliott, 2005). Much of the nature of transferability depends on the context of the other researcher who will look at the narratives and determine if the themes and categories make sense within the other context. It is important to acknowledge, however, that I do not try

too hard to generalize the themes from the narratives, and jeopardize the richness of the narratives themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Chapter Summary

As a form of qualitative research, narrative inquiry helps the researcher understand the experiences of the storytellers – allowing the researcher to enter into a kind of collaboration with the participants to relive and retell the stories and experiences of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While analyzing these stories, the researcher can come to understand the meaning that the narrators attach to their stories, and gain a glimpse into the ways they view themselves and their culture (Lieblich, et. al., 1998). Elliott (2005) states that “it is only by focusing on individuals’ narrative constructions of their lives and experiences that we can come close to understanding more about the way that they reflexively construct and maintain their social identities” (p. 186). Narrative inquiry is viewed as an appropriate methodology for feminist research and for research interested in social change (Davis, 2002; Personal Narratives Group, 1989) as it gives voice to the marginalized and an opportunity for reflection and enabling for action. A goal of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of the women’s experiences, give them a voice to tell their stories, and bring to their recognition the effect of societal and patriarchal power differentials on their lives, their choices, and their identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WOMEN'S NARRATIVES

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative research techniques, more specifically narrative inquiry to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of working class women who have become managers in a health care organization. The stories presented here are not complete biographies, nor are they chronological in nature. The narratives are in the women's own words, based on the anecdotes and stories they shared with me during our interview sessions. I have arranged the narratives in a consistent format for the ease of the reader; however each woman's own words link occurrences in her life unrestricted by time (Riessman, 1997).

A critical feminist perspective was used in the construction of the narratives to allow for the emergence of the significance of the women's socio-economic class of origin and gender in their experiences; in essence recognizing both the gender and class perspectives (Patton, 2002). These narratives are co-constructions of the women in the study with the researcher, set in such a way as to make them meaningful to the storyteller as well as the reader (Elliott, 2005). The co-construction of the stories encouraged the women's participation and collaboration while at the same time encouraging change and empowerment (Patton, 2002).

From the very first conversational interview, during the second set of conversational interviews and throughout the writing of the narratives, it became clear that the stories of the women becoming managers was directly linked to their working class origins and experiences, not only as a child, but also in the earlier years of their career. All of the women acknowledged the impact of their working class background upon their professional careers and manager roles. The choices that they had made up to this point in their lives were influenced by their working class values, usually without their knowledge or recognition when those decisions were made.

Repeatedly throughout the conversations, when I probed about what had motivated a particular decision, or asked questions such as, “where did that belief come from?”, the women made comments to me as “how weird is that” and “I never really thought about that before.”

The narratives are all presented in a similar format in order to assist the reader in understanding the women’s experiences. I worked with the women in developing this format, asking and receiving their approval to set them up in this way. The narratives contain the women’s stories of growing up working class, their early career experiences and transition to management, and their experiences as managers. Throughout each of the narratives, the continued significance of their working class values upon them today becomes clear. Most of the narratives are told in their own words, with only introductory or summarizing statements by me, the researcher, inserted to aid in the flow of the narrative. I merely assisted in the writing; these are their “stories.”

Introduction to the Participants

The following table will help the reader to understand the participants in the study. They are listed in the order of the women’s narratives that follow.

Name	Age	Years in Manager Role
Gracie	44	17
Lisa	35	12
Margaret	60	25
Ann	47	18
Jennifer	42	16
Amy	51	25

Olivia	48	12
Wendy	56	25
Katharine	43	10

The Participants' Narratives

In this section I present the narratives of the nine women who participated in my study. These narratives were co-constructed by me and them. The narratives are the women's stories; I merely facilitated the telling of them.

“She’s wearing scrubs; she must be working today.”

Gracie’s Story

Gracie is a Manager in a clinical, non-nursing area of a community health system in the Mid Atlantic region of the US. She started her career as a clinical technician and eventually moved to a Director position overseeing a variety of subspecialties in her clinical area. She gave up that position and is currently a Manager over one clinical technical area within the community health system.

I always joke that if I quit my job today and went to work at Walmart I would do my job the best I could; I would be head teller by the end of the day. That’s just the way I approach any job.

- Gracie

Growing Up Working Class

Gracie grew up in a small, relatively rural town in a Mid Atlantic state. She was the fifth and final child of a construction worker father and a factory worker mother.

Driven to Work Hard

Her father was driven to work hard, to “make hay while the sun shines” because as a construction worker, his income was unpredictable.

My dad was in construction and he would get laid off for sometimes six months out of the year. So I learned very early on that you can be working hard, and you know I used to see all these things on TV where these executives are losing their homes and my dad used to say ‘see, they count on all that money’. Dad when he worked, he saved money, he saved it all. We lived like we had no money. You lived like your heat was going to be turned off next week. He said, ‘when you’re working, you work hard’. He was always the one on the job who was sort of driving everybody.

My brother actually ended up working with him at one point in time. And he told us that people don't like working with him. He's way too driven; he expects everyone to work, work, work. Even when he's doing volunteer work, he expects them to do that. You know, you had to be there on time; you had to give the best day's work that you could possibly give. I remember him coming home talking about people who were lazy and this guy didn't want to do this; and they did this job so poorly that it had to be re-done. And I'd think, 'wow you must work with a bunch of goofballs' (chuckling). But they're probably just average people and he was just so motivated. People, the bosses loved him on the job because he would get twice as much work done.

Gracie's mother worked in a sewing factory; a very physically demanding job.

Well, my mother struggled. She worked in sewing factories and I can remember the stories of her carrying these big loads of materials up and down. She didn't make good money at all; it was very little money.

There was so much sexual harassment that went on in that sewing factory. I learned early on from my mother that I am not going to live that kind of life.

Negative World View

This unpredictability of income carried into her father's view of the world. This negative view also carried over into her family life.

My dad was so gloom and doom; the electric was going to be turned off. The foreigners are going to come and take over the world. There's not going to be enough jobs for all of us. I didn't have a real good picture of the world. My mom wasn't as negative; but my family life was nothing but fighting in my house; so I thought everybody lived like that. When I'd go elsewhere to friends and people would be traveling and doing things, I guess

I just didn't think too much about it 'cause I was so consumed in my own house. It wasn't a very positive picture.

I had to start working when I was, actually probably about eleven or twelve, when I started selling newspapers, 'cause if I wanted something I knew my mom couldn't afford it so I had to get it myself. I worked, I babysat, I worked at sandwich shops, I worked at [the local racetrack]. I worked really, in the summers I worked full time. I started buying my own clothing by the time I was in high school.

I knew that if I wanted something I needed to get the money 'cause I knew...if I wanted to go to a dance and the dance cost two dollars to get in, my dad would give me a dollar. I knew I needed to earn my own money.

Education as the Way to a Better Lifestyle

Gracie saw education as the key to a better life. She was encouraged to get an education to be able to be independent, to support herself and have a good income. Ironically, although her father supported the idea of getting an education, he wasn't willing to assist her in attaining it.

My dad ironically used to talk about getting an education, 'you gotta get an education so you can get a good job'. He didn't help us to do the things we needed to do to get an education, but he did put an emphasis on education. My sister went into the military so she could get her education; she was old enough that I looked to her as a role model. She was probably a better role model than my parents and I saw that she was really making it on her own. And just because my parents couldn't afford, couldn't or wouldn't afford to help us... There's a way of getting out if we wanted. So I think my sister was probably the motivation for me to get an education and a better, I don't want to say better, but a

different lifestyle than my parents had. I didn't want to be carrying loads of materials up and down steps and getting paid minimal wages or piece work.

If I wanted to have a better lifestyle than my parents, then I needed to get an education. I don't necessarily mean more money... having a better outlook and I think because my mom and dad did jobs where they were working for someone else doing really manual labor, tough manual labor. I think I wanted something different. So I knew I needed to work for it. There wasn't going to be a college fund, there wasn't going to be someone to hand me money to buy a car.

And when I had to figure out what I was going to do for a living, unfortunately my decision was guided by income – what my parents could afford. A friend of my father's actually worked at [the local community hospital]. I was there one day and I said that I wanted to go to college and my father wouldn't put his income on any loan papers. He wouldn't tell us how much he made, so I couldn't qualify for college. He said 'you should go into being a [xxx] tech or a perfusionist'. I said okay. So I looked into it and found that there's a couple of schools in the area that you can study to be a [xxx] tech and perfusionist. But the perfusionist, I didn't meet the requirements with the chemistry and the physics. So I started at looking at what I would need to get into [xxx] school. I actually thought I'd always liked medicine anyway. I thought it would be interesting so I started applying, got some interviews and got accepted.

Traditional Gender Expectations

Gracie's parents had traditional gender expectations for her and their other children.

My dad didn't really think that we needed a career. We were never talked to about what we wanted do for a living, careers. Now my brothers they did; and they said what skill do you want to learn; basically they were supposed to.

My sister went into the army to be a nurse; my other sister became a secretary. The only reason [older sister] went to college was because she went into the army.

I do remember I used to swim in a swim meet and my dad... I set the school record; I never had a school record. I set the school record. And he came home (he was at every one of my swim meets) and he goes 'boy those girls' meets just aren't as exciting as boys' meets'. So even when I felt good when I did something like that, he was proud of me, I knew it, but he made these comments and he just didn't know.

Gracie believes her mothers' expectations for her were traditional; she thinks she would have wanted her to have a good husband. But she also thinks that her mother's expectation was that she wanted more for her:

To have a good job where I could support myself cause she didn't have that. She worked in sewing factories and she was very unhappily married for years but didn't have the means to do anything about it. My dad focused a lot more on money. But I don't think he thought the women in the family, the girls in the family would be the ones making money. I think he thought his boys would be the ones.

So even though my parents never, ever spoke to me about what I should do for a living. I mean they just didn't. I was just supposed to graduate and get a job as a secretary or whatever. I think my mom wanted me to be self sufficient; so I wouldn't be dependent upon a man.

Negative Views of Management

Both of Gracie's parents had negative opinions of the managers they worked for. Those opinions were shared with Gracie from an early age.

I remember my dad and his friends sitting around talking about their bosses, you know 'do this, don't do that'. My father would have died if his boss would have come on the job site in a pair of jeans and would have dug in and helped them do the work. He would have, I mean he would never have seen that.

And in the sewing factory, my mom talks about her boss, who was a man, all women working in the sewing factory. My mom would have had bad varicose veins and she wasn't supposed to be doing a lot of steps and he would make her take goods down to the next floor. I remember thinking, 'I can't believe he wouldn't help her'. Knowing that she's doing piecework so she's losing money when she has to run this load down, she can't run down those so she's got to walk with this big thing. I just remember her saying, she'd make a comment and he'd say 'well then, you'd better hurry.'

Gracie's Reflections on Growing up Working Class

Gracie says that growing up working class has definitely affected her to this day.

I get my work ethic from my father; make hay while the sun shines, do this, do that. He was always the one at the job site, pushing, pushing, pushing and I think I picked that, way too much of that up so I didn't know when to cut it off. I still struggle with that today. Trying not to get so into it, so driven that no one will work with me. That is definitely the work ethic that I got.

Career and Manager Experience

Gracie attended a technical program at a nearby health system and worked there in a technical position after graduating. She worked in several specialty areas and as a technical specialist within the surgery areas of that health system.

She left that neighboring health system and became a chief tech in a subspecialty area within the current community health system and then eventually a manager.

I came to the XXX health system and I was working as the Chief Tech at the XXX facility and I was there for about a year; and then an opportunity came up at the hospital to move into a manager, the [whole department] manager position. And I really wasn't interested in it.... I shouldn't say that, I was somewhat interested, but I didn't think I was qualified. It was frightening to think about it; one of the [physicians in her area] came to me and said 'the hospital wants you there, this is what they want you to do and if you don't do it, you probably don't have a future here.' So I interviewed and decided it wasn't for me; it was a Director position actually. And I really wasn't interested.

About two months later, I got a phone call from [the senior manager who was overseeing that department] ...so I talked to him and he asked me to take the position as the [department] Manager, that I wouldn't have all of the responsibilities as a Director.

In the three weeks of serving my notice out, the job got upgraded and it was basically the Director job before I even started. It was now all of the [areas in the clinical department].

So I went right into that position.

But Gracie wasn't completely happy with that new role. '[I] stayed there about five years; it was a very demanding job. I have a son who at that time was eight and I don't feel like I was ever

really there for him.” After five years, Gracie stepped down from that Director position and took her current role as a Manager in a specialty area within that department.

From Tech to Chief Tech to Management

Gracie’s recollection of the transition from tech to chief tech was that it wasn’t difficult for her.

Even as a student, I was always more responsible than all my friends in high school. So when I was a tech, I was doing a lot of extra things anyway. I was always the one that the supervisor would come to and ask questions. I was in my mid thirties and I became the Chief Tech. I didn’t have a lot of self esteem. I knew the job – I knew I was a good tech. I felt comfortable with that. But I didn’t know if I could manage other people and I think because I worked my way up, I earned that respect. I treated people fairly. So I think that was an easy transition for me.

And then more opportunities came up when the company got bought by a larger company, to be part of the governing body, which was totally new for me. I had never been part of a group like that. So I started to realize that I do know some of these answers and I started getting more confidence.

Her transition into the Department Manager level position was not as easy for her.

When I moved into the [Department] Manager position, I was terrified. I went into a department that was down positions. They were very short staffed. Just in one [sub specialty area], they were down eleven positions. I hadn’t been in [that sub specialty area] in many years and that’s where the shortages were. There was nothing I could do pro-actively; it was all just putting fires out. So I ended up working as a tech the first couple of weeks so we could run a schedule.

I had really good people around me. The other [sub specialty areas] then helped out. I would just learn slowly. It was terrifying, the thought that I could come into a job and with that amount of responsibility and do well, I wasn't sure. I knew I was a good tech, I could be comfortable doing my own thing, but trying to get other folks to buy in ... it was scary. It comes from a lack of self esteem. You just don't know if you can do it.

Gracie's Management Style: A Leader not a Manager

Gracie believes that her working class background has affected her as a manager today. She expects a lot from her staff, but realizes the importance of family.

I expect that work ethic... I think I've earned the respect of my staff because I do work hard. When they are short [staffing], they know that I'll be there; they know that I'll step in and help them.

I'd rather say I'm a leader than a manager. To manage people sounds like you have to dictate what people do, when they do it and how they do it. If you lead people, you show them, this is where we need to go. I think that they'll follow you, if you've earned their respect. You lead by example.

I think I lead the team... people tell me that I drive them crazy sometimes; I do need to back off... I think I'm a leader and I think that's helped the team. But sometimes I have to back off and let somebody else lead.

When I have staff that have family issues, I make it known that family is priority. I expect one hundred percent when they're at work, but if there's a family issue, you need to be with your family.

Gracie's history of struggling financially has also impacted the way she manages her staff.

The crew that I have now and the crew that I had when I was [the Manager of the whole department] with 98 or whatever employees, I had people on opposite ends of the spectrum as far as income level... I can understand that sometimes people spend their last dollar before their paycheck comes. I've been there and I sympathize with them. It's not like I always had money and can't relate to that.

I know that struggle, so I think I'm an advocate for them. I've learned to budget my money very, very well. I mean, I don't spend beyond my means. I guess because of growing up in a family where your father was laid off for half the year, you learned. They know I've been there. I'll share it with them ... I'll tell the stories about when I didn't have money and I always encourage them to get an education. I want the best for them, even if it means they have to leave. Because I think you need to take the approach, you need to take steps to better your life and no one's going to hand it to you.

So if someone's willing to take those steps even if it means I lose them and they move on, then I applaud them. I think they all know that. I think that's probably because of my upbringing, 'cause no one's gonna hand you anything; you have to work for it.

Gracie also tries to be a more positive role model for her staff. Unlike her parents' negative world view, she strives to look for the positives in her staff.

There is good in every person. You just don't know what people go through in their lives and you wonder how some of them can get up and come to work. So I've got an appreciation and I try to find the positive, unlike my upbringing. Because I don't want to be like my mother and father; unlike them I do try to look for the positive in people.

Everybody brings something to the table. They may have their weaknesses, but

everybody brings something. I try to emphasize that and try to make sure that everybody else around sees what they bring to the table.

Sometimes I get just as mad as everybody else, get disappointed in them and then I have to re-group myself and say 'hey'. I don't have to make a conscious decision to know that they're good people. But [it is a conscious decision] not to just react when I've heard that they've called off sick again.

Gracie believes it is very important to be supportive of her staff and to stand up for them to those above her when it is needed.

When I first became [Department Manager], the [an administrative support area of the department] was non functional – they weren't even functioning poorly! That took a lot of time and effort; it was a team of people who really pulled together. What they needed the most was to be shown how important their job was and to understand the impact of what they were doing; how it truly was impacting people's lives. Once they understood that, celebrated their successes and learned from the mistakes they made... ironically they were the lowest paid people in my department and they were the best working team I have ever seen.

It took the littlest things – candy bars when they did something or they found something that was misplaced. Most of the time the criticism they were receiving was not for something they had done wrong, it was for other folks who had not brought back [items that were needed]. So we just really changed the processes and just the fact that they had somebody who would defend them and that would help them. They realized their job was extremely important even though their pay unfortunately didn't reflect it.

I would explain to them what the impact would be on [a patient] if the item could not be found. That if we spent three hours searching for [the missing item], we could save the [patient] six months of agony worrying. When they all put themselves in [the patient's] shoes, they were motivated and really understood how important that job was.

One thing we stopped immediately: that people were not going to be screaming at them and yelling at them. They were human beings and they had every right to have the respect of every physician or anybody that worked out of that department. I taught them how to interact with any hostile person... and just getting their confidence up. They do know their jobs and no one has the right to talk down to them. I would support them but they had to maintain their professionalism.

We had one physician's assistant who came in the [area] and was screaming at the girls that they are a bunch of 'f-ing idiots' that they couldn't find anything, that this person's life was in jeopardy because of them and why do we hire these idiots and went on and on. I made him come back and apologize in person to every one of them. I told him he was totally inappropriate. They were in disbelief that somebody actually did that.

We had another physician and I actually went to the Vice President of Medical Affairs and told him that if he doesn't get talked to, and if they don't file a grievance on their behalf, I will. They were impressed that someone would go to bat for them.

Gracie's Reflections on her Class Background and Management Style

Gracie believes that her background has affected her style as a manager today.

I think I empathize more with the employees because they're the ones that do the job. My background shows me that. I think people who come from an upper class and haven't ever struggled don't appreciate the fact that it is the folks below them in the factories and

wherever they work and are making the money and if they all walked out today, nothing would get done. My mother comes from a family of thirteen children and I don't think any of them were in management. They were all blue collar. That's what I saw all around me and they were hard workers, literally came home dirty.

I'm going to be a manager that empathizes and is there for the team. But if you're going to stay in that management position, you still have to do the job and still have to be profitable and so it's a tough walk in the middle.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

There are times, Gracie admits, that the working class values she learned growing up collide with the experiences she has as a manager. She has learned how to deal with those situations, although it hasn't always been easy. For example her strong work ethic sometimes is overwhelming,

I can now appreciate my father and how he was tough on the job site and thank God I have good team members that they can come to me and say 'you drive us crazy.' After you pull that knife out, you realize that they did the best thing for you and we give each other, give ourselves constructive criticism; we've all learned to take this very well.

I have pretty high expectations of my crew and I think they appreciate that. Believe it or not, they'll come and say 'you'd never let us get away with that'. I think just setting our expectations, making the expectations clear and letting people find their own way of doing it... of reaching the same goal. And that's tough.

Balancing Values and Daily Work-life as a Manager

As a manager, Gracie has to balance personnel issues and the need to run a profitable operating department. At times these two issues can be in conflict with each other. Values learned from her

background, such as treating people with respect can at times conflict with running the operations.

I think the people are the best job and the people are the worst job. I empathize, I know they're good people, every one of them is such a good person and when they have issues other people maybe don't understand them or what they're going through. I just try to treat people with respect, yet I have to deal with the issue.

My objective is to run the business and I think the best way that I can run that business is by creating a team that each does their job and we work well as a team and we can do the business. We can run the business, we can do what's needed, we can make money that my boss is expecting me to do. But you have demands of what's needed for the organization and you have the demands of the team. You are serving both of them and their needs may be different; sometimes what the organization needs isn't going to make the team happy. There's always a conflict so you have to try to really balance it.

I can make more money for the organization by cutting some of the team; that'll make them miserable and in the long run we'll make less money; so I think it's a balancing act and that's the struggle.... to be such good managers, we give everything we can to our staff and we still have to make sure that business is profitable.

Gracie consciously works at not coming across as more affluent than her staff, even though she obviously as the manager, she makes more money than they do. At times this can cause some inner turmoil.

When I'm with my team and we talk about cleaning or laundry or whatever, I'm embarrassed sometimes to say that I have a cleaning lady and I make sure I say 'she only comes every other week'. I minimize it...almost like I'm ashamed that I have someone

doing my cleaning. It's hard for me especially when I realize that some of the people I'm talking to don't have the means to have a cleaning lady. Why am I embarrassed by that? I don't ever want them to think I'm bragging. There is something there that makes me feel embarrassed that I have a cleaning lady. I hear myself downplaying it I don't want them to think that I am different from them... that I'm up here and they're down there (motions with hands); that I'm salaried and obviously they know I make more money than they do but I don't ever want it to come across that it makes us different in any other way.

One way that Gracie shows her staff that they are valued and important, and that she is not better than they are is to jump in and provide patient care when needed. She has observed though that her appearance on a daily basis spawns interesting staff comments and the notice of other managers in the health system.

I wear scrubs because half the time I am going to be [providing patient care]. Let's face it, someone is going to call off. I've heard other people say to me about me not wearing a suit, or about me wearing scrubs. What was the one comment I just heard last week [from a management colleague]? 'Oh, stop trying to pretend that you're working today'. And my crew says the same thing when I walk in in scrubs, 'oh, are you working today?' So when I'm in a suit, I'm not working. When I'm in scrubs, even though I haven't touched a patient... the team perceives it as I'm ready to work. If I come in in a suit, then I'm not gonna work. So when I'm sitting in my office writing policies, I guess I'm not working. Even my own team who I've worked with for how many years, thinks that someone in a suit, they're not working hard.

Choosing Values over Management Career

Gracie wanted to be a different kind of manager than the type she grew up hearing about.

In one instance that she relates, this concern for her staff led her to make a decision that impacted her career.

I had a really good job offer in the middle of [a department wide information system] implementation from [a competitive health system]. I interviewed about three times, they made me a really good offer and I said to the person who made me the offer, 'you know I just don't think I could live with myself. This is a great opportunity, and maybe down the road it would be the best thing for my career, but in good conscience, I could never walk out on this team, I just couldn't do it.' I felt it was the right thing. I don't regret it at all because ... I couldn't imagine going in to ...all the people who had been working so hard and saying I'm leaving in the middle of this – oh I couldn't have lived with myself. I would feel like I let them down; I started it and I couldn't bale out in the middle of it and let them down.

Gracie had been a Department Director position for five years. She stepped down from that position because she felt she was compromising her values and family relationships.

If you can't do the job and still have a personal life, it's probably not the job for you. I loved doing the [department director] job; I mean I thrived on the work. I don't know what it was that made me realize but I lost sight of what was important. You can't get those years back.

In order not to lose yourself and to be the kind of manager or leader that you always thought you should be, that your parents thought that they should have, it's very hard to do ...without really giving your total self. That's why I didn't stay in the [department

director] job because it just takes a toll on you, to be the kind of manager that you think everybody should be is exhausting.

You know, I remember my dad talking about ‘he’d [her dad’s boss] pull up in his big Cadillac, get out on the job site, he’d criticize the work we’re doing, he’d go off and we’d be out in the cold’ and so those kinds of things as a kid, hearing them, yeah, I thought I never want to be portrayed like that. So I always feel like I have to be there for my crew. I need to understand where they are; I always felt like I needed to be able to do their jobs to some degree so that I could truly appreciate what they do. All of that takes a major effort. And I think that’s why people who have really good intentions, after awhile it starts to take away from their personal life and it’s hard to still be that person and still get all of the paper pushing and stuff done that we know we have to do in management. I don’t want to get back into a job like that again where you have to be everything to everyone. At some point, there just has to be a happy medium.

Gracie’s Reflections on Conflicts Between her Class Values and Manager Role

It is important to Gracie that her staff like her. Her father has asked her the question “do they like you there?”

It is important to me. Sometimes I think too important because at some point you have to do the best you can and stop trying to please everybody. You have to be somebody different, sometimes too different. I think it’s very hard. I support all of them, I do everyone that I have in my department and I respect them, I respect the jobs they do. But sometimes I just can’t make them happy. I really feel I give my heart and soul to the job, to them, not the job, to them. And sometimes it’s just not enough. I feel like I’m failing

them sometimes. To me, ultimately that's my job to make sure that they're feeling appreciated and valued and sometimes I think they don't always feel that way.

Gracie agreed with the thought that class identity is easy to obscure, that those who come from a working class background might pass as a member of the dominant culture, but not feel as if you really belong there.

I think sometimes we do it. You do sort of feel like you're denying the culture of your home... not admitting you have a cleaning lady. At times I have made a real effort not use [the local, regional dialect of the area] 'cause I think you sound stupid. So I try real hard not to use any [local dialect] remarks. And those types of things, you are sort of denying the culture of your home.... You're still who you grew up and that's still in you even though you made some efforts to improve, not improve 'cause it's not an improvement, to modify your behavior. Or what they talk about there, your speech, your gestures, your appearance... I'm always going to be a [local town] girl.

And Gracie is very clear that the values of her working class background affect the way she manages today. And when those values conflicted with the reality that the job required, she stepped down from a higher level position.

If you're going to be in management and it's negative, or you come from a household where management was seen as easy and overpaid and all those negative comments that my parents had, you want to make sure you're not one of them. So you strive to be good to the employees, you're serving two masters at all times; you can't maintain that pace. There has to be a happy medium.

“You kind of step back and forth”

Lisa’s Story

Lisa is a manager in a non-patient care area of a community health system in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. She started her career in a staff role at a community health agency after completing her degree at a regional university. She has held various staff and managerial functions in regional health care organizations throughout this Mid-Atlantic state.

You know, I was a working class little girl...And now I’m not that anymore...it’s hard to separate yourself from that completely because it’s what you came from and who you are...you need to separate yourself... and move on... you do kind of step back and forth....

- Lisa

Growing Up Working Class

Lisa grew up in a small town in a rural section of a state in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S.

She was the only child of blue collar parents.

My mom has always had what I would call blue collar positions...when I was very small she worked in a factory ... and always had positions like that or in restaurants... my dad has always had kind of like front line supervisory positions...When I was younger he actually worked for my uncle who had a sawmill and he was a supervisor there...was there for several years and then transitioned into the food industry where he was like a production supervisor at a factory that made processed cheese products and things like that...

An Appreciation for Hard Work

Lisa recalls both of her parents working very hard when she was growing up. They work hard even today, and their work ethic is a strong part of Lisa’s value system.

There's that different appreciation for what hard work means and things that you own and what it takes to accomplish things. ... I mean my mom's work ethic is very strong even today. She helps me ... she's been over helping me clean and paint and all sorts of things and it's second nature to her. She doesn't even give it a second thought. So I think that has really been instilled in me and how I approach things. You know, I'm always trying to do the best that I can and know that things don't come easy. I've kind of learned that from watching them.

This strong work ethic also carries with it an appreciation for the things that you get when you have worked hard to attain them.

I think there's a different appreciation for things than people who aren't [from a working class background]... My uncle who owns the sawmill, they've owned it for years... and even with a sawmill, you think of like a working class type of environment, but because they own the sawmill, they of course were much more well to do than others... And I look at my cousins and a lot of things were handed to them... they didn't necessarily have to work for things or when they turned 16, they had a car... we weren't handed those things. And I think that being from a working class family you appreciate those types of things a little bit more. You had to work for those types of things; that was the expectation we had.

Lisa remembers watching her parents working hard and realizes the impression that has made on her to this day.

And I remember when I was little, my dad used to go up there on Saturday mornings and work, in fact my mom worked there for a period of time. They actually made like chair seats there and had like a glue factory part of it where they glued all the pieces together;

when I was little, my mom used to take my tricycle up... and I would ride around between the pellets of wood on my tricycle while my parents were working... 'cause my dad would go up on a Saturday morning 'cause he didn't finish what he needed to finish by the end of the day on Friday. So he'd go up in on Saturday and there they'd be working the glue machine and I'd be riding my tricycle. I mean, I vividly remember that. But I think because they took me with them... so I saw them in action so I think that made a difference. Even when my mom worked at the restaurant that my aunt owned...when I was little, she used to take me in and I'd help fold silverware in the napkins and stuff like that. So I think I was more exposed to it that way as well, seeing them do the work... I mean my parents were hard workers. They weren't someone who kind of moseyed around; they were moving and going and always busy and needing to get things done and that's stuck with me. I can visualize in my mind doing those things, folding the napkins and riding my tricycle.

Encouraged to Get an Education

Lisa's parents encouraged her to go on to college so that she could have a better life than they had.

I think my parents always tried to instill in me to do better; they wanted to see me go further than they did. So they always encouraged and talked about what I was going to be when I grew up, what did I want to do as far as college... and we always talked about that in some fashion, even when I was much younger.

Lisa knew that her parents wanted her to get an education and go further in life than they did.

She likens it to "standing on the shoulders of our parents" – doing better than they did. She says,

“It was always ingrained in me to work hard in school and be successful and do your best and that kind of goes along with that same working class mentality.”

Lisa went to college and majored in an area that allows her to work in a non-patient care area in a health care setting. Her mother, however had encouraged her to be a teacher, since that would be a good job for raising a family.

My mom always tried to push me to the teaching thing, like she thought I should be a teacher, you had your summers off and your holidays and raise a family... I think that came from her having such a large family and knowing how important it is to be with your family... I think that's why she encouraged me in that direction.... to this day she still says that so I think it's not that she's not proud of me ... but she always says 'oh I think teaching is such a nice career 'cause you can be home with your kids....'

Her Father's Negative View of Management

Even though Lisa's dad was a front line supervisor, he would make some negative comments about those in charge of the business.

When I was young, my dad worked at a sawmill which was owned and operated by my uncles...And he got along with them, but at the same time I remember him, when he would come home, making comments like 'they just don't understand what's involved' or 'they don't understand how much time put in on this' or whatever it might have been. And my one uncle who ran the sawmill... I remember my parents would talk about ... my dad would go ask for a raise, my uncle would say to him 'oh well, you just have to tighten your belt', you know, there was no money to give you just have to tighten your belt. And that would worry my dad that was a very physical job. I mean even though he was a front line supervisor, working in a sawmill wasn't easy work. It was dirty; it was

physical. But I remember those kinds of comments that they just didn't understand how much he really gave; how much he put into the job.

Lisa believes that these kind of comments that her father made has impacted her as a manager today.

I think... to a certain degree because that's not something that I would ever say to someone. Hearing my dad repeat it and knowing how it upset him and you know in my mind, common sense would tell you that you don't say that to your employees. You're not going to win friends by saying that... But yeah, I think it probably has made me more sensitive to how I respond to things and wanting to say the right thing, to not upset someone but at the same time, you have to kind of find that balance to get the message to the person without upsetting them.

Lisa's Reflections on Growing up a Working Class Little Girl

Growing up working class has impacted Lisa to this day. She really believes her background has influenced who she is as a working adult.

We grow up being a reflection of our parents and how you were raised and that upbringing is what really defines you. ...I'm a strong believer in kids are the way they are because of the way they were raised...I think any child is a reflection of how they were raised. And you turn out the way you turn out because of that. Yeah, along the way you yourself are making decisions for yourself, you make a choice and you have to deal with the consequences but you make those choices based upon all of that foundation that you were given by your parents...any child is definitely a reflection of their parents....

Lisa believes she has incorporated the values and beliefs of her working class background into the way she lives and works today.

I think a strong work ethic...I think another piece of that you kind of dealt with what was given to you, you kind of roll with the punches...I don't think you expected ... my parents, they didn't expect things to come easy. You know, they were used to having to work hard for things... my mom grew up on a dairy farm.... nothing in her life every came easy to her. So I think that was part of what she always tried to instill in me... things aren't just going to be handed to you. You need to work for what you wanted in life...I think that I've done that. I pretty much put myself through college and saved money. I lived at home; on my 16th birthday, my parents didn't show up with a Mustang in the driveway (chuckles), there was never anything like that (chuckles). So I think because of their background, that's what was instilled in me, is you have to work hard for what you want, it just doesn't come handed to you on a silver platter....

The experiences that Lisa has had growing up working class and experiencing job loss herself have had an impact on her today, in the way she looks at things and in her relationships with others.

I think that things like that build character in people. I think it helps to... defines how you're going to react to similar things in the future. You know now that you've had that experience and I guess even as I get older, I find myself... I don't get freaked out by things. You know, things don't stress me out...'cause I think it is what it is and you've got to deal with it and most situations it's not a life or death thing, it's going to pass eventually and you have to find kind of a silver lining to that. And I think things like that help to define who you are and help to kind of build your resistance to those things. And I

think in some situations has helped me to help other people cope with those types of things when those types of thing happen to them.

I mean, even with my parents, 'cause my mom is the kind of person, she kind of panics when things don't quite go... and you know, I've kind of developed that attitude 'you know Mom, it is what it is.' You gotta do what you gotta do to get it done or whatever it might be. But I think because I've experienced some of those things it kind of helps me to maybe be supportive of other people as well.

Career and Manager Experience

Lisa always knew she would go on to higher education after high school, and thought she had a clear career direction. That changed when she was a junior in college however.

When I was in high school... I remember just having conversations with my parents about where did I want to go to college and that was when we lived in [a large Midwestern city] at the time, so I had these aspirations of going to a local college there because at the time that was pretty much all we could afford and always had in my brain that I wanted to be an accountant for some reason. I don't know why, I wanted to be an accountant because I thought they made a lot of money and that would be a great job to have. So I also remember having conversations about that and then when we moved [to a Mid Atlantic state], we still talked about those things but then of course it changed because we lived in a college town where we moved to...

When I went to college, when I went to [regional university], I started out as an accounting major because I still thought that's what I wanted to do... got the whole way to my junior year, the middle of my junior year and I was not doing so well in a couple of my classes....at that time then I started to rethink, you know, is accounting really for me

because like I said when I originally thought about it, it was more or less the prestige of being an accountant and thinking that accountants made a lot of money 'cause you know, they worked with money. And the more I thought about it....so I changed my major half way through my junior year that December.

And my mom was like having a panic attack because she was worried that I wasted all this money and was going to be in school an extra year, and have to retake classes and all that kind of stuff. I still graduated like I normally would have....

During her senior year at college, her parents started pressuring her to get a job lined up for after graduation.

The January of my senior year there was an ad in the paper for a [position in her major area] at a local [health care facility]...And my dad had seen the ad. Well by that point in January, now mom and dad were like 'you better start looking for a job; you'll be graduating in a few months'. And at that point, you know, I had senior-it is and that wasn't really what was on my mind. I thought, you know, I'd wait until April and start sending resumes... this was January. So to pacify my dad I put together my resume and sent it and I kept telling them they want someone with experience, they're not even going to look at my resume. So I sent it off and you get back the normal 'thank you for applying, we'll be in touch' yada, yada, yada. I never heard anything of course and then once it got closer to the end of the semester, I started to apply for different jobs but I was applying for...like entry level stuff 'cause I knew that's how I could get my foot in the door. So I was interviewing other places and nothing was coming to fruition and finally right before, it was right before Memorial Day, I got a call from this [same health care facility]...they decided to re-evaluate the position and they made it a lower level

position.... So I figured, 'yeah sure, what the heck, you know', so I go in, go through the whole interview process and had gotten the job because that's how it ended up that they were looking for because she wanted someone that really was green that she could kind of mold and teach things. So that's how it worked out.

Lisa stayed in that entry level position for about a year and a half and then was promoted to her first supervisory position. Another year and a half later she moved to a larger health care organization and within a year, she was promoted to a manager role within that organization. Unfortunately, the company wasn't doing well financially, and she was laid off from that position. This was a traumatic time for her.

I had moved out [of her parents' home] when I had gotten the job at [this larger organization]. In fact that year, when they laid me off in December, that July I had just bought a townhouse and I had bought a new car. You know, things were going really well so when all that happened, it was major panic time.

When I got laid off at [this job]... that came out of nowhere; had no idea that was even going to happen. Sometimes in those situations people sometimes have a vibe that something's up, but that was really something that caught me off guard at the time. And I made the best of the situation that I could; they gave me a week's notice. I kind of cleaned up things that week and started to job search immediately the next week. And within a month I had a job; but the immediate announcement of that was devastating... I'm like thinking of all these bills I have; it was a really traumatic experience for me. And again, you kind of have to go with what's given to you, and make the best of it.

Within a month or so, Lisa landed a job in her field with another regional health care system and after three years in that manager role, she moved to her current position as the manager of a non-patient care department in a community health system.

Lisa's Challenging Transition to Manager

Lisa says that her initial transition into a manager role was challenging for her.

When I was at [first health care organization she worked for], and made that initial transition into a supervisor role, it was challenging for me because that was all new territory, supervising someone. And I was like 22 years old, and I was supervising people who were 20 years older than me. And I think probably it was even more difficult for them, you know being supervised by someone so young, who had no experience. But they were all very good; they were all very open to it; I didn't get a whole lot of resistance and I remember doing my first evaluation.... she had the kind of personality that sometimes rubbed people the wrong way. So I would get feedback from time to time that maybe she wasn't being cooperative...that's how she came across to people. And I remember sitting and talking to her about that and was so nervous about how I was going to bring this up to her because I really needed to have the conversation with her.I had the conversation with her and after the evaluation, she must have then went and said something to my supervisor about our conversation, but it was positive... how she appreciated that I was very fair with her and I wasn't accusatory and my approach to it; which my supervisor had kind of mentored me through that... I think it went well and the outcome then helped me to have conversations with other folks and helped make that transition.

Lisa's Management Style: The Importance of Communication

Lisa believes that her background has influenced the way she manages today.

I've seen how hard my parents work, you know working extra hours, and just in my mind working not harder than they should, but I think in some cases I feel like, just listening to the stories my parents would tell, when like they were taken advantage of at work because like people knew that, ask them, they'd do it. If you need something done, go to that person. And my parents are the type of people that wouldn't say no... If they had to work ten hours, extra hours today they'd probably stay and work ten extra hours because that's how they operate. So I think all of that has kind of shaped that for me...

One aspect of Lisa's management style that she says has been influenced by her working class background is the importance of open communication.

I think the open communication is something that's important...because I've had that pretty much in every setting that I've worked... yeah, you have things where you wish someone had been more open with you about, but I also understand that there's limits to some of that...

I'm always very conscientious about getting back to somebody, communicating something to someone, and again I think that comes from how I was raised. That's how my parents approached things in their work, 'cause I would hear them talking about that. Or complaining about other people that they worked with who weren't like that. That frustrated them, because they weren't communicated with, they weren't getting their jobs done.

I do try to meet regularly with [her staff]; I do try to meet every couple of weeks. And they know I have an open door. I mean if they have a question, they don't have to wait

until we meet to ask that question. They all seem, at least I think they do, they all seem comfortable coming to me if they have a problem or concern. So I think we have a good relationship in regard to that.

It is important to Lisa that she works with her staff when it is necessary to get the job done.

When we have the Department of Health or the Joint Commission come and we have to [do what they ask], I'm there helping them when we need to. You know, I don't feel I need to sit in my office and direct that. I know those are things that need to get done and it's not something that just they should be doing. You know, if it needs to get done, we all get involved with that.

I feel like there's a kind of relational thing that takes place and that's why... and my staff often say to me how well I understand and they appreciated that I understand and they appreciate that I understand what they're doing... 'cause I know the behind the scenes stuff, I lived it, been there and done that. So I think that's why I have a different kind of working relationship with them because of that.

Lisa recalls a situation at a previous job where she was involved in interviewing an applicant who would become her boss: "In the interview we asked her ... what her management style was... and she said 'I'm someone who rolls up my sleeve; I'll dig right in... I'm not above helping with things...'" Laughing, Lisa recalls what happened after the person was hired:

And it was so funny because it was maybe within a year of her starting, we had a ... mailing that needed to get done and there were problems with the printer and we didn't get everything back 'til the very deadline and everyone was like all hands on deck to get the mailing out in time so it got to the staff and it was literally folding and stuffing envelopes. She was nowhere to be found. And she knew this had to be done so it was

kind of the office joke that she said in her interview to come across as 'oh I'm really a participative manager and very involved' and when it came time to do that she was nowhere to be found (chuckling).

But I think that that's important; I think that your staff need to see that you're okay with that, that you're not above them, that you don't place yourself on a pedestal... for the most part when there are things like that, you do what you gotta do to get the job done...

Is it appropriate for someone in a management role to be spending their time doing something that might be more of a clerical function, no not on a routine basis. That's just not an efficient or effective way to do it. But when there's something that's a crisis kind of thing or an urgent issue, you do what you need to do and the Department of Health [situation] is the thing that came to mind for me because we've done that more than once.

Another aspect of Lisa's management and professional style is the importance of initiative and follow through, doing what you said you would do.

I remember her [a former boss] making the comment to me how she always appreciated my 'can do' attitude. And that's always how I've been. If someone asked me to do something, even if I've got 600 other things on my plate, I usually say 'yes' or 'yeah, I can get to it, but it might not be within the next week or two.' But she always would say that, at the end she made that comment to me that I should keep my 'can do' attitude, because that was going to get me far and you know, she saw great things for me....

I remember my supervisor at [previous health care system] ... made a comment to me one day when he was doing my evaluation.... he wrote on a piece of paper, I can't remember how the question was at the top... but something about accomplished the goal or something like that and it was yes or no. but his thing to me was if you had to summarize

how I approached work ...and it was gets shit done, that was how he wrote it on the tablet...and that's how he said it to me, that's how he viewed me. He said that's what you need to do, you get things done. He said 'I give something to you and I know it gets done. I know you're going to follow up. I know you're not going to leave somebody hanging.'

And again, I think that's part of my style.

Lisa says that it is important to her to keep herself somewhat separate from the people that she manages. Again, talking about her former boss,

She was very motherly, like that was her management style, instead of helping you problem solve and figure out the next step, it was more of a motherly kind of conversation that she would have with you. And in some ways, not that it was demeaning, but it's... I didn't need her to be my mother. I needed her to supervise and help mentor me and point me in the right direction.

That's not really me, when it comes to work... I try to separate my personal life from my work life. And I think that's very different for some of my coworkers or the people who report to me. And it's not that I'm not interested or not that I don't care, that's just not been my way. I've always felt that needed to be separate to a certain degree...and she was always someone who... shared personal stuff, you know one of those situations where you probably knew more about her than you really wanted to know (chuckles)....

But Lisa believes it is important that her staff know that she appreciates them. She believes this came from the way she viewed her parents' work.

I feel like both of my parents are very hard workers. Growing up because of some of those comments that they made, I kind of felt like they had positions that weren't very glamorous, you know there was no glory in what they did. I don't think that they got a lot

of recognition for what they did, but they did it anyway. And they always had, because it's working class, I had always viewed it as hard work itself; you know it was labor.

They both had blue collar types of jobs and I think that's part of the reason I went in the direction I did. But yeah, I really did view it as they did a lot of hard work for not a lot of acknowledgement of that.

I'm somebody, even if I'm not handing out a bonus, I'm at least thanking them or trying to acknowledge them in some way; that they know that I appreciate what they've done.

And again and I think it's the little things that mean a lot in regards to that; and it may mean on a Friday afternoon saying to them, 'hey everyone can move out early, you did a lot this week or you worked on this project' or whatever it might be. And just kind of letting them know that you see what they're doing; you know that's it's not gone unnoticed; I think is important.

Lisa's Reflections on herself as a Manager

Lisa realizes that her choices today as a professional and a manager were influenced by her working class background. The things that are important to her in her career and in the way she manages, she recognizes that she learned them from her parents and the way she grew up. She tells this example from her dad's work life.

And even just this past weekend, my dad was talking about, he had to go in and work on a Saturday, and he works second shift; where the day shift supervisor wasn't required to go in. And he was upset about that, he was like if I have to go in and work extra time to get out this order, why isn't he required to do that. You know, it kind of comes down to they know who the guy is who gets it done. That's who, sometimes that's who work falls to. So again, I think that's part of my background that's shaped me to, you know, always

follow up with people and you stay on top of things, and I value that in other people. You know, when I ask someone a question, when I request something, I know that they respond quickly, I appreciate that 'cause that's what I would expect.

She believes that the moves she made with her family when she was a child (they moved from the Mid-Atlantic to the Midwest and then back to the Mid-Atlantic) has helped her as a manager today.

I think that moving... when we moved I was in ninth grade and we moved again before my senior year, you know I think moving around at pivotal times... helped me deal with change... I think I'm very open to change. And I try to, you know when there is a major change happening, I try to convey that in a positive light to my staff and what the benefits are to it and try to have that open communication so that they feel like if they are questioning something or it doesn't make sense, they know they can come and talk to me about it; that it's not just ... a done deal, this is how it's gonna be, that's it period. So I think the fact that I had to cope with that kind of change, has helped me deal with change right now.

Lisa says her life now is influenced by the values she learned growing up. Those values have influenced her in her management career as well.

And I think based on how things have kind of evolved for me I think it goes back to that not giving up, realizing that things aren't given to you. You know I always felt like I had to prove myself to get to that next step....

When Values and Manager Role Collide

Lisa admits that there are times when the values that she learned growing up working class conflict with the expectations of her as a professional and a manager. For example, at times

Lisa's value of working hard conflicts with the reality of needing to balance work and personal life. Sometimes she feels guilty about that.

I guess there's times and I think about that even now, not just back when I was first kind of starting out...but I think there's times when I feel like I should have done more or did I do everything I should have to earn my paycheck this week. Do you know what I mean? Or I get that guilt complex when I know I'm leaving early for something and I think 'oh geez, maybe I did I really put in my time this week?' All of that goes through my mind and yeah, I think it goes back to how my parents instilled that in me and everything. They were such hard workers and it seems they were constantly working and when I do step back and slow down, I feel guilty. And sometimes I feel like maybe I've not given enough.

Here's a good example...I consider myself an early bird person, I've always been that type; I usually get to work between 7:30 and 8 and compared to other people, sometimes that's early. But at any rate, that's kind of always how I've operated; I'm much more of a morning person. So considering that, and in a lot of my other jobs I would work straight through lunch; you know that was just kind of the dynamic of those organizations; you really didn't stop to take your time to eat lunch with other people. I remember one time, this is when I was at [a previous employer]... towards the end of my time there, and I was leaving one day and it was 4:30 and he [her boss] made some sort of comment to me. I can't remember exactly what he said but he made some sort of smart comment to me about 'oh you're leaving already'. And it really hurt my feelings because I'm thinking 'oh my gosh, I've been here since like 7:30, I didn't take a lunch, I had XYZ meetings and I worked late yesterday...' and I'm thinking, you know, obviously he

hasn't been paying attention all week to know what I did but at the same time every time I'd go to leave early, I'd think about that comment he made... And that has always stuck with me. I will never forget him making that comment to me about me leaving early...and I never really said anything to him about it ... But I was just kind of flabbergasted that he said something to me ... it was almost like a little jab or something. And it just bugged me after I got thinking about it, you know I really did put my time in today, it's not like I'm sneaking out at 1 o'clock or you know. But I've always had that feeling, like you know, I always feel like when I leave early or do something like that I always kind of have that guilt complex about me. ... Even when [her current boss] comes to me at say 2 o'clock on a Friday and says 'why don't you just go home', I'm like 'well no, I still have this and this and this to do' because I feel guilty about leaving because I know I have something to do.

Because she values working hard, she has those same expectations of others. Sometimes other people don't have those same values.

I think it impacts how I view other people's work 'cause I think that I always expect other people to perform the way I think I should perform.... So sometimes that's frustrating to me. You know, again some of those values even growing up... you're always on time. My parents were never late for anything. We were always the first ones wherever we'd go (chuckles). So that's kind of my thing as well and I think that's kind of why I'm such a morning person. Like I think I have to be there first thing, so that when I'm around someone that is late or never meets deadlines or someone who forgets things, I have to remind people that just frustrates me. That just drives me crazy, 'cause that's not how I operate. ... And I think, too, you know like a sense of urgency about

things...someone gives me something I usually try to be as timely as I can, with whatever it is, again 'cause I don't want someone to have to remind me, 'cause that's embarrassing to me for somebody to have to come up to me and say 'hey did you get that thing that I asked you for a week ago?'

Interestingly, her strong work ethic has also caused a conflict at times with a superior. She relates this example:

One time, I can't remember what I was working on and my supervisor actually made a comment to me about how I needed to slow down. Like I was basically working too fast or doing too much... [The superior] comment to me was 'you need to chill out, you need to slow down...we'll get to that when we get to it.' Because I was trying to cross things off my "to do" list, and I don't remember if it was because I was or if it was things I was reminding her about or if I was waiting for her to make a decision because I couldn't go any further and I was kind of spinning my wheels... [The boss] made a comment to me one time about ... sometimes my expectations of others is up here (motions with hands) when maybe it should be here (moves hands lower).

[The boss] made the comment to me about the fact that I needed to slow down; that she knew there were things that I wanted to get accomplished but that everything couldn't get accomplished on my timeline... And I was really taken aback by that because I'm someone who prides themselves on being able to get things done. If somebody gives me something, I don't take six months to do it if it's something that I know needs to get done. Now granted, there are projects that pile up on your desk that don't always get immediate attention and that's prioritizing more in my mind, but I was really taken aback

by that... I think that's more of [the boss's more privileged] background as opposed to the working class so that [the boss] operates from a different mindset....

When asked if she relates this value conflict to her working class background, Lisa replies:

Yeah, I think so, just because that's how my parents were. You know, even growing up and doing chores and things like that there was always the expectation that you did them when you were told and you got things done and in a certain amount of time. Even now, it's kind of funny because even now I think about my relationship with my husband and I've witnessed my parents 'cause my mom will say something to my dad like 'well why don't you take this out to the garbage' or 'why don't you do this' and he won't do it right that minute and that's like what her expectation is. I'll notice that with my husband I'm thinking 'oh my gosh, that's exactly what my mom would do.'

And I kind of, and I do those things at work too, like when I say something to somebody, like 'hey when you get a minute, do this' but that's not really what I mean. What I mean is 'can you do this right now?' but I don't want to say it and be demanding to the person, but that's my expectation. 'Cause that's again, just how I've seen things growing up, when something needed done, you did it. You didn't wait until two days later... if it could be done in a few minutes and you had a few minutes to do it, you did it. So I think that plays over into work... But again it was kind of weird to have my own supervisor say to me, you need to slow down, you're working too fast... you're putting pressure on everyone else that shouldn't be there....

Lisa also discusses a conflict that she has had with her working class in-laws.

Really my husband and I on that side of the family are really the only ones ... who have gone to have a college degree.... the rest of his family is all blue collar. And I really have

nothing in common ... I think that having a college degree and having a more professional type career, you're different as a person because of that. And it's hard to relate on other things... I think all of that impacts that ... I think they view me differently ... And it's funny because my father in law used to be in a union and he would make comments, you know. In fact, I remember when [her husband] and I started to date, and [husband's name] told him what I did, and at the time he was still working... but he made kind of, it was a jokey kind of comment, but it was nonetheless... he made some kind of comment about 'oh, you're one of those... people;' there was already that tension there (chuckles).

Lisa agrees that because of her professional life as a manager, the expectations on her are different in work settings versus family settings. Again, relating to her in-laws, she says:

Yeah, yeah I would agree with that; I would definitely agree with that... I do feel like when I go to family functions with them, I have to put on a different hat. You know I kind of leave the [Lisa], the professional, educated person at the door and I go in the door and mould to their way. But yeah ... you do kind of feel like you're leading two lives or something (chuckles) sometimes.

We kind of adapt to their, because really you've lived both lives. You know, I was a working class little girl, do you know what I mean? And I'm not that anymore. So it's hard to separate yourself from that completely because it's what you came from and who you are. But at the same time, you know you need to separate yourself from that to move on with your career and your life and yeah, you do kind of step back and forth in that...

Lisa's Reflections on her Working Class Values and her Manager Role

Lisa definitely thinks her class values influence her today as a manager and as an adult in her personal life. The guilt over spending money on things that aren't practical or on services done by others that she can do herself can be seen in the examples below.

It's funny 'cause [her husband] and I ... had this conversation... after [her son] was born, I was kind of feeling down in the dumps and felt like I needed to do something for myself; he's like 'go shopping or buy yourself...' I always talk about a COACH purse... 'go buy it, just buy it, you've been talking about it for a long time...' and I to this day don't own one 'cause I feel like, yeah I could probably afford to go buy one but at the same time, do I want to spend that money on that purse? I could spend that money on something more practical, you know that's just kind of the practical part of me...I feel guilty when I spurge on something; if I do buy myself something....

In fact [her husband] made the comment to me about a cleaning lady 'cause friends of ours who are the same age that we are... they've got a lady that comes in I think once a week to clean their house. And I remember making the comment to [husband's name] 'why would you have a cleaning lady if you were completely capable of doing it yourself?' ... I mean I'm completely capable of getting up and dusting and vacuuming ... but I remember making the comment to [husband's name] 'why does she need a cleaning lady, she's perfectly capable of doing that'... At any rate I guess that's part of my guilt... I would feel guilty having someone come in and clean when I know I'm perfectly capable....

These values and the expectations put on her as a manager today can produce an internal conflict within Lisa. She describes a conflict relating to common sense and making decisions, especially as it contrasts to others who have come from a more privileged background....

I've used that comment [about someone not having common sense] myself when describing other people (laughs)... My parents have used that phrase and I've used it in other circumstances. ... I think that mentality of the whole common sense thing comes from being that working class person. I think when you're raised by people like that, they're more practical; it seems like things are more logical. They take time to think through things and they taught me to do that. ... And I think that people who come from a more privileged background aren't exposed to some of those day to day problems or issues that maybe a working class person is so they don't necessarily develop that kind of innate ability to reason through something or use their common sense to come to a conclusion about something, you know....

Lisa relates a story about a former boss from a privileged background that made snap decisions, immediately reacting – which is something Lisa is not inclined to do.

And I'm the type of person; I don't like to immediately react to something. I feel like I need to think through it. Even when somebody calls me and says '[Lisa] I have this problem, what do you think?' often times I'll say to them 'well let me think about it or let me check into it and I'll get back to you.' ... And I don't know if that's more of a working class thing; is that something because you were raised that way, do you think through things more logically? Do you take more time to make a decision because you know there's a bigger impact to it? Whereas someone from more of a privileged makes the decision that immediately comes to mind, not thinking of the ramifications because

maybe the ramifications aren't that big of deal to them. Maybe I'll make a decision and hey this is going to cost me a thousand dollars so I really need to sit and think is this what I want to do or is the best approach. Whereas someone from a more privileged background says 'well I've got the thousand dollars to blow so even if I screw it up, no big deal; I'll start over,' ... And I think that kind of trickles back to the common sense thing in some regard. ... Yeah I think having to think through... you've internalized you know, you need to meet the expectations of someone higher than you or an authority, so you take more time to make that decision because you know it's important to make a good decision and it kind of relates to that whole common sense thing. You want to make the decision that makes the most sense; it the most logical and effective; maybe that upper class person doesn't think that way because they don't have that kind of internalized battle that's going on.....

“Work Hard for Every Dime You Make”

Margaret’s Story

Margaret is a Director in an outpatient patient care area of a community health system in the Mid Atlantic region of the U.S. She started her career as a Registered Nurse and has had a variety of management positions in different patient care areas with both her current employer and a regional competitor. She has recently left her management position with the health system and has moved on to new professional challenges.

I’m not really that impressed with myself (laughs). And it’s probably good...I give it my all in whatever I do; I take it seriously at the time; I like to have fun. But that’s what I do... I come home and I’m doing something else... I don’t take myself that seriously.

- Margaret

Growing Up Working Class

Margaret grew up in a small, relatively rural town in a Mid-Atlantic state. She is the youngest of five children to a stay at home mom and a father in the home construction business.

Working Hard for every Dime

Margaret says that hard work was emphasized in her family, especially by her father.

Hard work was one of the most important things that was instilled in us. We heard ‘if you don’t’ work hard for every dime that you make, you’re not worth a whole lot.’ Definitely that was preached... in the entire [extended] family. My [extended family member] is a plumber ... and he literally runs when he gets in the door from Point A to Point B. That’s the way we were taught to work... Work came first.

Her mother however was also a role model for hard work.

Even if my mother was cleaning the house, it doesn’t matter what it took, how long it was; she just went through like a storm trooper. No matter what you did, that was the

expectation – you did it well, you did it quickly and you didn't settle for anything that was not perfect.

The expectation of working hard was also reinforced by observing her parents' behaviors and their comments about others' work ethic.

It was more by observation... comments particularly by my father... [There may have been] a subcontractor who was lazy – supposed to show up today to put in tile in the bathroom, but he didn't. It was those kinds of comments that was brought out in observation.

Don't be a Quitter

Finishing what you start, not being a quitter was also something that was expected of her as she was growing up. When asked for an example, she replies: “Well the first thing ... my nursing program. Nursing school was hell. You had two weeks off a year; it was tough.... it would have been very easy to quit. But I, no way am I quitting.”

She still carries this strong value with her today – and has those same expectations that she instilled in her children.

I'm not a quitter, at all. In fact, talking about finishing things, if I start a book that I don't really like and it's like 'wow, this thing stinks,' I'm going to finish that book. I will not stop. I make like 'okay' and go through.... gotta finish that book.... I will finish a book even if I do not like it and I think that's just a little sign of 'I'm just not a quitter.'

My word, my commitment to things, and being dependable to people is very important to me. If I agree or give my word that I am going to do something... and I got this from home, too... I'm going to kill myself to get that done.... That type of dependability and me being able to give that to others is extremely important to me. And that's kind of like I

parented; I wouldn't let them quit things....So they got the same message from me, you don't quit.

Learning to have Respect for Others

Margaret believes that she learned respect for others from her mother.

...from my mother in basic right and wrong ways of treating people. Everyone, I don't care what they do, everyone deserves respect; everyone deserves to be acknowledged or thanked at the end of the day.

My father controlled all the finances, she was not able to be very giving with material things, but she always gave of her time and her talent for baking. She's a wonderful baker.

Strong Gendered Expectations

There were strong traditional gender roles exhibited in Margaret's family. Those strong traditional roles not only impacted her in childhood but also as an adult.

I was raised in a family; my father's opinion was what was heard. If anybody else had one, you didn't speak it. Most of all, my mother never said much of anything. He made all the rules; he made all the decisions. I broke out of that... (laughs).

My mother was very submissive and in my first marriage I was very submissive. And nursing actually helped me realize 'you know what, you've got a brain; you can handle responsibilities.' And through [my] divorce and raising my daughters on my own, I preached that to them: 'you let someone know when something doesn't fly right with you, you communicate. Because if you don't, it's going to come out in some way.'... Submissive, no; I broke out of that mold.

The Role of Education

Margaret was the only one in her family to continue her education past high school. Her father wasn't really in favor of the decision at the time.

You weren't really encouraged by the [high school] advisors in those days and I'm the only one in my family to continue my education outside of high school. And it was secretarial work, school teacher or nurse. That's what was kind of put out there...

Education was not looked at highly by my father. It's interesting 'cause I had to kind of fight that a bit; I wanted to do something after high school. I didn't want to just stop, go get a job in an office. And so I had to discuss it with my parents.

My father was the fight...and I really needed to convince him that I needed to go. My father was very tight fisted; so going to a four year college, are you kidding? Too expensive and I think that's one of the reasons I went to nursing school.

In many ways, her father devalued education, especially when it compared to hard work.

My father... [would say] 'he went to college or she went to college but I can outwork them any day'. Again it was that work ethic. 'They have an education but it doesn't mean anything; I can kick their butt around the block. I can build a house and they don't even know how to do it.' That kind of thing.

Her mother, on the other hand did encourage her to go further in her education; a chance her mother didn't have.

It was my mother; my mother was forced to leave school in 8th grade. She was an A student, an intelligent woman. And I think 'til the day she dies she's going to regret that she never had the opportunity to do more with her life, 'cause she could have.

My mother would have wanted all of us to do that [go on to education beyond high school], but I was the only one in our family who continued their education.

I don't remember ever talking about [to her dad regarding the costs of going to nursing school]. You didn't talk to my dad about finances. I may have given it to my mother...

She's a smart lady, did not have the opportunity, had to leave school and work on the farm after eighth grade which was typical. But she was the star student, so I think she could live that through me a little bit.

Margaret's Reflections on her Working Class Family Life

Margaret is proud of having grown up in a working class family, with working class values.

'Without a doubt' those values learned in childhood continue to impact her today.

I'm proud of that [her working class background]; I have pride in that. I'm proud that I'm the one and only person to continue my education out of high school and I'm also proud of that high work ethic that was given to me. I mean I am who I am, whether it was good or bad messages from my father or mother, it is who I am. It had an impact that I'm extremely proud of....

The blue collar, we're the one that keeps this country going. And so, I'm proud to have had that... and grateful because it has made me what I am.

Margaret credits much of who she is today, the values she portrays and even her management style to the influence of her mother.

My philosophy... women keep the world going. And my mother was submissive; she still kept the world going.... When I did a leadership course for my bachelors' [degree], it talked about the leader in your life. And even though my father was the loud one, making all the decisions; none of us have followed his path. We've all followed my mother's

path.; who's very kind, who thinks about people, who's as generous as she could be. And that was the foundation of my leadership paper.

People would look at us and say 'oh wow, look at that father, he is really the leader.'

Where in reality, he wasn't; it was really my mother. Without saying anything; just by doing.

Career and Manager Experience

Right after graduation from the local high school, Margaret went into a three year hospital based, diploma nursing program in a nearby city. She got married and had her first child within a month of graduating from nursing school. She and her first husband moved to a city in the southeastern region of the U.S. where she worked at a university based medical center as a staff nurse. When she and her family returned to the area where she grew up she worked first as a staff nurse in a medical/surgical area. Her working class values followed her there. "You know, you work your butt off and I really saw myself as a staff nurse. I didn't mind chatting with people, but I've got work to do. Work came first." Within a few years, Margaret transitioned to the manager of that patient care unit.

Margaret has had a variety of nursing and management positions with her current employer and at one point she had gone to a larger regional health system for a period of time as a manager over several patient care areas. She came back to her current employer in a manager role in order to establish an outpatient specialty area for the health system.

[A senior manager] called me and said 'we'd like to talk to you about [starting a new outpatient area]. We haven't had any luck; we just don't feel like any of the people we've been interviewing...would you talk to me?' I said 'sure' ... I thought about it for a couple of weeks... because a lot was happening at [her new employer] at that time... there was a

lot of stress, so it just seemed the best thing to do at the time. And it really truly was an opportunity of a lifetime.

Margaret's Transition to Manager

Margaret's first venture into a manager role was when she transitioned to the Nurse Manager of the unit where she had been in the role of staff nurse.

I really enjoyed it; I tell people if [that particular unit] would still be up there, I'd probably still be the manager. It was a really busy... unit; it was not in the pretty part of the hospital. But I used to dig right in there with the staff, helped them do whatever needed to be done... I had high expectations; little things like be here on time.

But I found out that I don't need to deal with people who are ill; I don't need to provide patient care. I just needed to deal with people and I was happy. I had a lot of energy – I was young.

She was promoted to the manager role as the former manager was demoted, making for a somewhat awkward situation.

The manager who was there was very old school. They [administrators at the time] asked her to step down; actually she reported to me. [The senior manager] called us together in the kitchen and said basically '[Name of current manager] will no longer be your manager...we think there are a couple of people in this room who would be...' (and looked at me) 'good candidates.' So I hadn't thought about management, but I thought, 'okay, I'll talk to them.' I was offered the position.

[The former manager who now reported to Margaret] was an interesting person... from the old school and my observations... if there was a weak person, she would hammer

them. Hammer, hammer, drill them down, make them feel terrible. Scream at them; I hated that.

The other manager, who had been manager prior to my taking the position, walked into the room after I got the job. She said ‘can I see you for a minute?’ I said ‘sure’ and she looked at me and said ‘I gave you your position, and you better watch out, ‘cause I could make your life hell.’ I said ‘thank you for sharing’ and I walked out of the room (laughs). She didn’t make my life hell.

It was difficult for Margaret when she had no one to mentor her in her new manager role. She learned how to manage through the situations she experienced: “By luck (chuckles)... by experience, just try something this way, if it doesn’t go well, ‘oops, that didn’t work.’ ‘Cause there really was no support; there was no one telling you how to handle things.”

But she relied on her working class values such as communicating with the people who did the work and getting right in there with them to see her through and learn from those experiences.

I communicated with them; I used to come in on nights. I’d set my alarm and come in at 3 am ‘cause I started there on nights. I knew 3 am was a good time to have a staff meeting. I’d go in at 3 am, have a staff meeting; go in at 7 pm for three to eleven and have a staff meeting and day shift. It was just a great learning experience. What’s amazing is, as you know, there are no classes for ‘how do you become a good manager.’

There was nothing; you managed by observing, what your experiences were.

Margaret’s Management Style: The Importance of Respect

Margaret absolutely believes that the values she learned at home have impacted the way she approaches her job and her management style. For example, dependability and doing what you said you were going to do are extremely important to her.

Just to give you an example, I email [other managers] questions; there are not even a handful when I email them a question will get back to me. It's really frustrating. I find that totally intolerable. Even if you're really busy or tied up, you say 'hey, I got your email, I have to look into that, I'll get back to you. If you don't hear from me in a week, let me know.'

I'm just a believer in getting back to people. Someone in [her] department makes a suggestion and I consider it and for whatever reason it doesn't work, if I don't get back to that person and say 'hey, thanks for your suggestion, we investigated it... I talked to [her boss] about it and we're not going to do it because...' I believe communication and that kind of dependability is the foundation for everything we build on.

Margaret also believes that the values of respect for others, those values that she learned at home also impact the way she manages her employees: "you treat people with respect and appreciate them for the individuals that you are. And I found that has always worked for me."

She has high expectations of the employees; but she makes sure that they know what is expected of them.

I give positive feedback. But if I need to talk to you about a behavior, we're going to talk. I will always be kind; I am very generous, maybe too generous. You know I may have spoiled some employees over the years. But my standards and expectations are very high. I tell them what we expect from them. I tell them the kind of interpersonal relationships... we talk about work ethic. And other expectations are talked about before they are even offered a position. I even jot down what they say about their ability to meet and fulfill our expectations.

She really values working hard. This impacts not only her own work ethic, but also the expectations that her employees will also have a strong work ethic.

‘If you don’t work hard for every dime you get, you aren’t worth a lot.’ I learned that at home hearing things that my father said. I still have some of that in me. Even though I’ve worked very hard at treating everyone the same, responding to everyone in the same way, when I see a self starter, when I see [an employee] who resolves issues and comes to me and says ‘hey this is what I did,’ you know ‘should I have done anything differently?’ [An employee] who when they’re finished with their work don’t just think ‘oh, I’m finished’ but they’ll go in other areas and ‘is there anything I can do?’ When I’m on the edge and doing an evaluation...if I have a question, gee should it be a two or a three, you get a three.

I find I really admire it and I take note of that. I also know that people who just sit and talk, and I don’t have a problem if you sit and talk if everybody else is finished, if there is nothing else that could be done... I would take note, even though I would not berate people – I remind them gently. But given the opportunity to that self starter, ‘hey... great job, thanks for doing that... I noticed you went... and helped those patients and I really appreciate that.’ Always try to set the tone, set the bar. And it’s not that I think those people aren’t worth a dime, just that someone else is worth a quarter or a dollar (laughs).

She has similar high expectations for herself; in fact she considers herself to be the role model for her employees.

I am truly a believer that... a manager sets the tone in a department; I’m a model. I’m a huge believer in modeling. Because the way you model is the way people are going to be. I think in that respect, I followed [her parents’ } model as in regard to their work ethic.

This includes working side by side with staff, providing care to the patient if needed.

Dig right in there with the staff... oh a lot of ways at the [areas she manages], we had call-ins. I can remember we had three call-ins one day and they were all clinical staff. Flu season, you don't have a choice; you know your whole day is out the window. [A few years ago], was the summer from hell... they knew that [a competitive service] was opening, they would not let us have any more staff... it was just crazy. I had no choice; you just throw away the calendar for the day and dig right in there.

But I've been that way. I think that's important to do; and I try to go to all different areas [in her department]... move a patient, help them, tie up a trash bag, mop a floor... People notice those things and I think that's important. And they have to realize, and I think the staff eventually did, and the physicians, that I could not be doing that every day because there were other things that I was responsible for that no one else was. I think when given the opportunity ... it's nice to do those things that might take you five or ten minutes. They'd always thank me and I think they knew that was just the way we operated; if something needed to be done, do it. We don't sit there and say 'hey you need to go do this.' Just do it. Could be walking someone... but it's going to help that [employee]; it's going to take that thing from them so they can focus on something else. They notice; just like I notice what they did and didn't do; they notice what I did and didn't do.

That respect for others carries over into getting their input into decisions that affect them; after all they are the ones who are doing the front line patient care. When asked to describe her management style, Margaret replies:

Not dictatorial at all, participatory. I want people's ideas and thoughts on how to do things. There are times, like I have news for someone... that is, I don't have a choice,

something was taken out of my hands.... This is the way it is, you need to know about it.... I see myself as very open, inviting to staff; I want to hear what they have to say. I want to get back to them with comments or follow up on their issues. I want their input. I want their feedback on something because they're the ones doing the job, not me.

Margaret believes in sharing the glory with her staff when there has been a successful outcome on a project or on targeted benchmarks such as patient satisfaction scores:

We were actually in the top 99.9% [of national patient satisfaction scores for her department]. We were in the top four organizations in the country. I had a hospital from [the West Coast] call me and say 'you're on this list... what do you do that's different?'... That was nice, but I don't think about it... I always projected it back to the employees... I always projected it back to them because I may set the tone, but the patients see them. They don't see me.

Reflections on Working Class Values and her Management Style

Margaret's work ethic and sense of obligation to keep on becoming and growing has been strongly influenced by her working class family.

I think you're never done, you keep growing, you keep learning. And that if I would think that [she had 'made it'] of myself, it would not encourage me and inspire me to do better things... my nose is to the grindstone. I inconvenience myself, do what I need to do and I never feel complacent. The minute you do, it's going to go the other way. I really do see that if you become satisfied with where you are... that's not... you're going in the other direction.

But on the other hand, the job isn't her whole world.

Management very often is more difficult than the physical work... it can be extremely draining. My whole world and my being, even though I gave it one hundred and ten percent every day, was not wrapped up in that job. That's one part of me, but there are many other parts to me.

Margaret credits her working class background, and in particular her mother's influence on her management style today.

It's the little things. She never like had money on her own, of her own but she used to do little things for people. Little favors, like bake you a cake that would make people feel good. And I know I've gotten that from her. I write notes to people all the time. I have written notes to all the employees because in a week and a half, I'm not going to be there anymore.

The day I leave, I'm going to put them all in the mail because there's something personal I want to say to everyone. It's those kinds of things that she had a huge impact on us. [An executive at the health system where she works] says a lot 'you [last name], you're always positive, you look for the bright side of things' and I always say 'thank my mother.'

When Class and Manager Role Collide

There have been times during Margaret's management career, where her working class values collided with situations she was in, behaviors expected of her, or the behaviors of others.

Games Played by People in Power

During her early years as a manager, she experienced behaviors by those in a higher management level than she, behaviors that she felt clashed with her expectations of a manager.

It was a tough group, that [XXX administration]. I got along with them okay; I didn't like them. There were too many games being played; I hate games. It's a waste of time. You know, tell me what you want; let's move on from this. I hate politics; and they were just the queens of politics. Just, ugh, it was bad. I can't say I learned much from them other than maybe how to organize policies and procedures, keep things in line and maybe not how to treat people. That's what I learned from that group.

One situation in particular stands out to her.

There was a manager [on another unit] at the time; she was a sweet girl, very quiet, not very assertive, but her heart was in the right place. I saw her just work her butt off. For whatever reason 'they' didn't like her; they made her life miserable... to the point where they drove her out of the organization... other manager, it was a gentleman; they didn't like him for whatever reason. And just bugging him all the time, talking down to him, on his case... until he left....It was a witch hunt; they were big on witch hunts and all that political stuff you know. If you kissed their butt, then you had it made; and I'm not a butt kisser... I cheered and jumped up and down [when that group of managers left the organization].

Instead of criticizing people, coach them, help them to do better; help them to understand why that decision or that behavior was not the best. It just didn't happen that way. It was basic morals and standards and ethics. That comes out also in management and those basic things that I just did not see there....You couldn't trust them; it was all a game. It was about power.

Communicating Respect

At other times, Margaret's values regarding respecting others and communicating were not valued by others. She has had some communication challenges with physicians for example.

I can remember one doc just screaming at the top of his lungs out of [an area in her department]. And just walking up to him and say 'when you calm down, you can come back to my office and I'll talk to you' and turning around and walking away. There's one [physician] ... who just attacks people and I found myself wanting to avoid him whenever possible. That wasn't communication, it was always attacks, it was always the same old thing. He's just one of those obnoxious, arrogant people. Well that didn't go well and I found out it didn't do any good to even comment to him or state my position 'cause he wouldn't listen to it anyway.

So I learned with him just shut up and let him get it over with and he'd leave. That's why there's a sign on my door 'Everyone brings joy to this office; some when they enter, some when they leave.'

On other occasions, Margaret's background and working class values of respecting those in authority kept her from communicating in the way that she thought was best for the employees or the organization. In the example below, she describes communication difficulties with a senior manager to whom she reported:

[Name] was an interesting person.... thinking about the things she would jump on, it was just a waste of time... wanted the power, wanted to make all the decisions. But the majority of our meetings, it was very frustrating, she would just complain to me 90% of the time about other [managers at various levels of the organization], 'they don't know what the hell they're doing.' And there was a part of me again, because of where I come

from, my background that I respect position. I would say certain things to her, but then I would let it go, I would step back because of her position.. Not because of her, because of her position.

Choosing the Ethical Thing to Do

Margaret says she had to be assertive at times and choose the right thing to do – even if it meant butting heads with people who might have been in a more powerful position within the organization than she.

[A patient care manager at a high level in the organization] used to call [the floor where she worked] and give verbal orders... you can't take verbal orders from another nurse... I became manager and I said '[Name], you have to write them down and have the doc co-sign them; we cannot take verbal orders from you.' She said, 'okay' and I quick called [my superior] and said 'you're going to get a call.'...

I can remember a [physician] calling, he wanted us to give this woman a med that affected her clotting factor an hour before she went down to the OR. And I'm like 'I never heard of this med,' checked and thought, 'we can't give this' so I called and said 'I'm sorry, we can't give this.' And he wasn't very happy with me at all, but you know, it's like 'hey we have a license.'...

So I made ruffles and waves, but I was very, you know, if that's what the Nurse Practice Act says, that's what you do. If that's the right thing for the patient, that's what you do. I can also remember being a manager there feeling like I was schizophrenic at times because I approached every doc who came to the desk to make patient rounds differently, depending on who they were, their personality... to get what I needed for the patient.... I

did manipulate them, but not for anything I gained, for what we needed for that individual patient. I did that a lot; I got good at it (laughs).

Learning from her Mistakes

Margaret's caring and giving nature as a manager was learned at home. However at times, her employees have taken advantage of that. She has had to learn to put aside her tendency to be overly generous and caring when needed for the betterment of the employees.

I had two employees who were great employees. I worked every other weekend and they were on that weekend with me. And they were always late; here we go again, one of my things. I warned them during the interview. I have a thing; my big thing is to be on time. But I said, 'what can I do to help you be on time?' And I remember when my alarm would go off, this was stupid to do, it should have been their responsibility, I used to call both of them. And later I learned, you know what? What have they learned from that? I'll bet to this day, they're both late. But that's not my issue or problem. I remember saying to myself, 'what's wrong with this picture? You're a well trained dog calling them so they're at work in the morning on time.' You know, on a Saturday and Sunday.

Being Aloof versus an Employee Advocate

Margaret works hard to maintain strong relationships with her staff and get their input. Because these values are so important to her, she finds it difficult and frustrating when those in positions of authority in the organization don't demonstrate those same values.

People... making decisions about [a department]; they didn't know anyone, they were never there.... they were making decisions on presumptions or other things that others said and they chose to believe or not believe. That always bugged me. How do you really

know, how can you make a decision, get your butt out there. Talk to people, see what's going on.

I put the shoe on the other foot, if I was in a position where I was responsible for [areas] that I didn't get to see every day, at least once a week I would be there, if it would mean stopping on my way in... To me, that's not a big deal, you would want to – how do you know, how do you know what's really going on if you don't make your presence felt? That's my philosophy.

I really look at it that for me that's a big part of customer service – the employees, without a doubt, they're important, physicians, patients. Physicians, it's hard to say sometimes, they can drive you nuts, but they are.

I had to be and I felt I always was the employees' biggest advocate. They are one of my biggest customers, along with patients and physicians.

Reflections on Conflicts between Class Values and Manager Role

Margaret's background has 'without a doubt' (her own words) influenced her professionally and as a manager. There have been times when she's had to choose how to react to a certain situation that went against those values.

One area that is really important to her is making a difference. She wants to be in a position where she can have an impact, make a difference: "I think when you're a manager, you're in a position to make an impact, to make a change that generally speaking on a staff level wasn't available for you." She has enjoyed being a manager, having that ability to make a difference and found that it was in many ways an extension of how she approached her career prior to moving into the role: "I was always a leader on the shift. I'm not sure; it's just kind of your nature takes over. You make decisions; you know people count on you."

Through it all, however, she has kept her sense of humor about the work environment and most of all, about herself. She says she doesn't take herself too seriously.

I'm really not that impressed with me, I don't take myself that seriously. When I was president of [her states' patient care specialty association], the Department of Health wanted us to have new rules and regs.... So as president, I got the national organization involved, [and her state's professional association for physicians]... we had this hearing with the Department of Health... and it needed to be done. I don't think about it, but it needed to be done.... [a coworker] said 'you are here with [Name], the national president of XXX and people from [the state's physician association] and they're calling you by name.'... I don't think about that stuff, big deal. I did it because it needed to be done.

(Whispers) I don't take myself seriously, (laughs) at all.

You have to choose

Ann's Story

Ann is a Director of a specialty area in a community health system in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. She started her career as a registered nurse, moving into a specialty area of nursing within a few years. She later became a manager over that area. She has had several different managerial roles at the health system, including a senior position over multiple patient care areas. She stepped down from that position and currently oversees a large specialty area for the health system.

When you're on your deathbed, do you think you're going to be thinking about what you did at your job? Or are you going to be thinking about what's important to you, your family, your home...? Your job, is that what you're going to be thinking that you worried about? ... That's not what's going to be important when you're gonna have your last breath on earth.... it was well worth the cost to give up what I could have had for what I wanted to be.

– Ann

Growing Up Working Class

Ann grew up in a small, relatively rural town in a Mid Atlantic state. She was the second daughter, and final child of working class parents. Her father worked as a patient care aide (orderly) at a local medical center and her mother worked as a line supervisor at a local pharmaceutical manufacturing company.

Get an Education

Ann's parents encouraged her to go on to school and to go into nursing.

I came from a working class background, my father and mother worked two jobs and their goal was to have my sister and I get a college education. I went to catholic school ... and when I was in high school I worked at the hospital... I always wanted to be in the health care profession... my father worked at the [a large local medical center] and he also

encouraged that. My mother worked as a line supervisor at [local pharmaceutical company].

I always liked helping people. I think I always had a soft touch for older people... I wanted to do something in health care and always wanted to be a nurse...thought that was a way that I could help people and thought that was a very good career. My father worked in a hospital and he felt that was a very good career for a woman to get into and could make a livelihood of it.

My parents were proud of me because... they came from a working class background. They had no college education, they graduated from high school. I graduated from high school; I graduated from nursing school... and they were very proud of the opportunity that they could give me. My father worked two jobs and he would cut grass in the summers so that would pay for my education and my sister's. And my mom the same thing.

Work Hard for What You Get

Ann saw her parents struggle financially. From that experience she learned the value of hard work and the realization that she needed to work to obtain what she wanted.

I saw my parents struggle to get by, to give my sister and I a better opportunity and valued that... worked hard for everything that they got. And that's how I saw that I needed to do the same thing; I had to work for everything that I got.

My parents worked very hard for what I had and gave their all to my sister and I. And it was a struggle at times, and with my children now, I think a lot of it is things that I would never been able to have, is very easy for them to get now – material things, I'm talking

about. It doesn't need to happen like when I needed to work for something. It wasn't handed to me.

Ann also sees the importance of making sure her daughter understands the importance of working hard.

You know, I talk about work ethic. I'm also instilling that in my daughter. My husband and I, we both come from the same grain essentially in that we believe in a high work ethic.... I think that's the other piece of it; when children see how their parents handle a situation, then in turn that's how they handle the situation.

You Don't Quit

One of the values that Ann learned at home, and carries with her today is the value of seeing things through. She takes her commitments seriously and doesn't quit.

When I wanted to do something, I always wanted to succeed at it. That's how my parents brought me up, if you do something, you take it on, you finish it to the end, they don't see quitters. I never wanted to be a quitter.

I have a strong work ethic 'cause I feel I give my all and everything I can give for the common good. When I make a commitment, I will work hard to fulfill that commitment. Even if it does not work out or it takes a different path, I will try my best to make sure I make the commitment....I think from my working class background, where you were ending up that it's important if you do something you do it well. That's what you're supposed to do.

In my heart, I know that if there's a situation, I will do everything I can to try and make it right. And if it doesn't become right, fine, but I'll know that I did everything I could to give my all to make it right. And that's why I say 'I'm not a quitter.' My mother and

father always talked about never being a quitter. And I talk to my daughter about that, if you're committed to playing soccer or you're committed to something else, you're not going to quit halfway through it. You're going to see it through to the end; you may not like it but you made this commitment and a team or a group of people are looking to have you be part of it. You can't quit; you've got to give your all. And that's how I think I look at my whole life...

Pencil Pushers

Ann's father made comments periodically about managers at the hospital where he worked who didn't get up to help their staff when their help was needed. He called them "pencil pushers."

He would make comments about certain managers who sit behind a desk, all hell would break loose and they would not get up and help. That's mainly what he would talk about; pencil pushers he'd call them.

These pencil pushers, that you know everything's going wrong and they don't want to get involved; they don't want to get their hands dirty...

A bad manager is the pencil pusher, the person who sat behind the desk and everything was breaking loose and never looked up because they didn't want to get involved; they thought it was not their job to... He would talk about peons. He would say that they had the attitude that work was for peons.

A Gendered Importance of Home and Family

Ann's emphasis on the importance of home and family is something that she attributes to her working class background and upbringing.

My mother's probably good at making me feel guilty... I seen it in her mother and I've seen it in my mother and it's not that they do it malicious, or that it's done on purpose,

but I do have some guilt. I mean, if I didn't call my mother every day, I'd be guilty about it. If I don't call my mother every day, I do want to anyway, or don't see her every day, I'd have tremendous guilt. Or if she said 'I needed something, would you take me here?' and I told her no, I'd have guilt.

I have some compulsive things that I expect; I would never leave the house with dirty dishes in the sink. That was mother, you never did that; she'd always talk about that. My mother is very compulsive with that.

Ann's Reflections on her Working Class Background

Ann believes that her working class background has affected her work life and home life today.

I think as women we want to be super women, we want to be everything for everybody. Where we don't in the end take care of ourselves. We're the last to take care of ourselves because at work we give everything we can and perhaps that's from the working class background too; well I saw my mother do the same thing – my mother worked two jobs. You know to give your all, give your all at work, give your all at home. But in the end you're giving for everybody else, a piece here and a piece there. In the end it's kind of thought of that what you need is at the lower part of the chain there. Everyone else needs to be taken care of and you come last.

Career and Manager Experience

After graduating from high school, Ann attended a three year nursing school and worked at the local hospital in a clerical role on the weekends. She worked as a nurse at the hospital after graduating from nursing school.

When I graduated from nursing school, I took about three weeks off. I'd always worked; I worked every weekend and I worked every summer during high school and nursing

school, then I took about three weeks off, studied for my state boards, took my state boards and started on a [XXX] unit at the hospital as a day/evening graduate nurse. It was a tough transition because first of all I worked with staff and I worked with physicians for probably about five years and they knew me as a [clerical staff]. So when I ended up coming out of nursing school, I was committed to wearing my nurses' cap so that they knew I was graduated from nursing school because they would come up to me and ask me to do the [clerical] duties and I wasn't in that role anymore.

Ann worked on that nursing unit for approximately one year and then moved into a specialty nursing role at the hospital. She worked in that role for approximately eight years.

Ann's Unexpected Transition to Management

One Friday night, Ann's manager called her at home and asked her to consider becoming the manager of a similar, but smaller unit at a smaller hospital within the hospital system.

My director... asked if I would go to the [XXX hospital] and manage ... that was a [smaller unit] and I was scared. I mean, I had no idea what I was getting involved in, plus they were different physicians and different staff than the [YYY hospital], a unit that I was accustomed to for many, many years.

Mrs. [director's name] called me at home on the phone 'cause I think she had issues, she didn't know how to handle it and she said to me would I go ... and help manage the [XXX hospital] and I said to her well when would, this was on a Friday, when would you like me to go? Well, Monday.

I got there with no one; I had no direction at all, into a place where I had no idea what the facility was like. I had no idea what the staff were and the people there resented [me].

It was not done right for me... I was called on a Friday night, had no education, not even thought about that, there was no succession planning from manager to think about when she was going to retire or what was going to happen...not only have no education in management, but be put in the position where there was no one there to help me on a day to day basis to even figure out how to manage this unit.

I was at the mercy of the staff that were there essentially, trusting that they would let me know what the ropes were at the facility, and knew how to manage a schedule, knew how to put up a schedule... I had no idea and walked into that situation.

After a few years, her boss planned to retire within a few months of giving notice. However, she injured herself and she needed to retire earlier than originally planned. As a result, Ann took over managing the units at both hospitals.

I was welcomed; I had a very good relationship with the [physicians] that I worked with and with the staff. I felt I was respected and they trusted me. I was one of them; so when I came back and managed it, it was a smooth transition.

Ann received several more promotions at the health system and ultimately moved into a senior manager role. After a few years, however, she stepped down from that position and returned to a director level role overseeing several specialty patient care areas for the health system.

Ann's Management Style: Building Trust

Ann's rocky transition into a manager position made her determined to succeed in that role: "I was determined...they thought I could do this, so I'm going to make a go of it... I was an outsider... here I was this young nurse ... coming into a management position with that staff that had been there...."

Getting my Hands Dirty/Building Trust

One of the first things she did was build a trusting relationship with her staff. And she did this by ‘getting her hands dirty.’

[When she first became a manager] there was a person there who really resented it....felt she should have had that opportunity to manage the unit. So I had to build trust and I think a lot of it had to do with, I got my hands dirty. I was back there, I was in there working. I was determined at that point; I did work directly with the staff, worked with the physicians so that they knew first off I knew...my specialty.

I just worked with them directly and I took call. I worked... and started to realize who the people were that would help me and support me... and started to build that trust and in turn, they came, they helped me.

I learned as I did it and also had to build trust that staff that were in the position would help me as I was learning it... that they would give me that opportunity because they could have made it hell for me.

I didn't know if this was really what management is all about (chuckles), but knew that I was asked to do it and I just, I did it. And when I look back, there were probably several times when I went home at night and thought ‘why I am doing this?’ But this was my upbringing, you're asked to do something, you take it on, you accept it and you make the best of it.

She's One of Them

Ann feels very comfortable in her current manager role – with her current area of responsibilities and the employees she supervises. She has learned by working directly with them for “many, many years.” Remembering her father’s opinion of management, she stays involved.

My management style is I like to work directly with the staff. I like to get their input. I'm not the dictator style; I like to have a cohesive, working style with the staff that I work with. I believe in getting input to make decisions. But there are times when as a manager you have to make the decision, you can't get the input, it has to be done.

I like to be considered as part of a team, not essentially as someone that is in an office and is secluded and is making decisions and not getting them involved.

Not Asking Staff to do What She Wouldn't do

Ann's work ethic that she learned at home translates into her expectations of her staff and also of herself.

I give my all at work; I think a lot of people associate work ethic with showing up on time, being there for the job, being reliable and when you're asked to do something, follow through with it. Don't expect others to pick up the load.

But Ann's strong work ethic carries over to her expectations as a manager – not just her expectations of her employees, but the expectations she has of *herself* as a manager.

I would never expect anyone to do anything that I'm working with or managing that I would never do myself... and I think that comes back to... respect and staff. That goes a long way when you're willing to do the things that you're expecting of the people you manage; in the end when the time is tough, that will pay you back full, one hundred percent. Because they respect you more, they will go, they know that if you've asked them to do it, that that is your work ethic – that you would never ask them to do something that you wouldn't be doing yourself 'cause they saw it, they saw it in the past where they saw you actively involved in things when they needed help. So when it's tough, they will stand behind you.

Ann's Reflections on being a Working Class Manager

Ann believes her working class background really influences her management style today.

I believe it does because as I said, I came from a family... my parents worked for everything that they had. And that's how I felt. I had to work for everything that I had; it was not handed down to me. And the majority of the people I work with came from working class backgrounds. I believe that they valued that – people who work their way for what they get, versus someone coming from the outside and being handed something that they see as someone who should be working for that... I do think that staff accept managers who are put into that position who have worked their way up within the institution versus someone completely from the outside who is handed a management position that they do not know or are even sure that they have proven themselves. I think that goes a long way.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

Ann believes that there are times when her working class values collide with the expectations of her as a manager. She has also seen this in other women who have come from a working class background and gone into a manager role.

No Longer Friends

In particular she has seen situations when women transition from a staff role into a role supervising the people she used to work side by side with.

If I would have stayed as a staff nurse and then transitioned right into a manager at the [XXX hospital], that would have been a lot more difficult because I know that there is a person there that actually stayed in a supervisor position there and that is what happened to her and that was very tough. And staff that knew you and worked with you as staff,

you now became their boss and some people try and take advantage of that. It was very difficult for her; in fact I think even many years later, it is still difficult. She still works with people ... that she worked with directly when she was staff... directly at their peer level and were friends with these staff.

I think the best way is if you can somewhat remove yourself and then they look at you because... they are always looking at you at the peer level of being staff. That's how they knew you and also built relationships at that level, so when you become a manager, you have to put some of those relationships and personal relationships aside because you're managing them and that their work that they need to do versus working directly with them and becoming their friend. You're a different member of the team than you were at the staff level.

At times people have tried to take advantage of friendships with Ann in her role as a manager. This has been difficult for her.

I think there's a fine line between building relationships with your staff and then becoming friends with them.... I think a lot of the staff I work with, but I know not to cross that line. I had a situation where I worked with a [physician] that I became very close friends with...and I remember my VP telling me that [the physician] may take advantage of the relationship at work... and believe it or not, it did happen. This [physician] and another [person] got into an argument at work and this [first person] called me at home and asked me to intervene ... and I had to say 'I know you're my friend, but I can't get involved in this... this has nothing to do with us being friends.'

It was a hard lesson for me to learn because that person no longer wanted to be my friend anymore. It was very upsetting... I realized in the end that she was really never my friend...

So there may be some people who try and take advantage of that situation but you have to realize that you can no longer be friends with the people that you're managing. You have to be fair, and you have to make sure it's the best for the situation and the best for the institution. I also think that people realize that, a lot of people do realize that and they understand that; they work with you on that. But there's still some people unfortunately who may try and they'll test you and see if they can use that friendship that you once had with them to take advantage of situations.

Doing What is Expected

At times in her early management roles, Ann felt as if she didn't have the direction that she needed; she had no one to guide her as she was put situations that she wasn't sure how to handle. But she kept going on, didn't quit because her background told her - that was what she was expected to do.

I can think back... there was frustration at times because I felt that I was put into situations where I had no one to mentor me. I had no one that I could have ... work with me. I got a call on Friday night and I was asked to... take a management position... I had no training, no management training.... not only have no education or background in management, but be put in the position where there was no one there to help.

The first day I walked into the department, on that Monday [an employee] whom I had never met tells me within the first four hours that I was there to watch my back because there's someone here who wanted my position and they will be out to get me while I am

there. So I went home that day and thought ‘what did I get into?’ But knew that I was asked to do it and was expected to do it and wanted to make it work.

Every day I went there and I just was determined to make it work and there were days when I went home and thought ‘this is crazy, why am I even doing something like this?’ ...also frustrated that I didn’t have the support that I needed to... succeed in that position. I wasn’t given that opportunity, so I was going to make sure that I found that opportunity. I started to take management classes and starting working on my [bachelors’] degree.

Even when she was faced with situations she wasn’t sure how to handle, she didn’t ask for help – opting instead to deal with them the best way she knew how.

We had two physicians who were arguing in [an area where they could be overheard by the rest of the staff] that I had to go in... And here I was, this person that was pretty young and [said] ‘this is getting out of hand; you’re too loud; you need to stop this.’ It was actually two partners that worked together that were arguing over something from the office... I realized whatever I would have done there they would get back ‘cause they had a partnership. Eventually they resolved their differences.... I was just wrapped up in the point of ‘I’m new here; I have no idea ... what is going on here...’ I could not call anyone. I didn’t feel comfortable to call anyone because I felt like I was just kind of left out there working alone and really didn’t feel very supported. I wanted to prove myself and if I would have called someone and asked for help, perhaps I would have looked, it would have looked, they would have looked at me as if I didn’t know what I was doing. So I decided I was going to resolve it myself.

The Expectations of Managers

Ann admits that there are times when the values she learned at home conflict with the expectations that may be placed upon her as a manager. One area of struggle involves the value of 'getting your hands dirty' with the 'hands off' role of a manager.

There was a situation with a patient ... in [the specific unit], and I have a supervisor who works in the [specific unit] and I felt I left her down because I was not there to help her in that situation and I was telling my boss that. I said I felt I left her down and very frustrated because this happened and I was tied up with this whole week of training. And she said 'that's not your thing, that's from her, she needs to take care of that.' But ... I didn't feel that way; I felt I needed to be there and I said 'that was my job to be supportive to that supervisor and I was not available to do that.'

And I see that a lot and that can cause a lot of struggle with people who feel that it is for them to be just as involved as the people that they manage and then have other managers or directors who feel like you heard, 'that's not for you to do, that's for them to do.'

And I think that's a struggle, that's an internal struggle when you see people who don't have that same work ethic and I also think it's hard for staff when you've worked with a manager who has the work ethic that I'm talking about and they're willing to do extra and they're willing to do everything that you've asked them to do. Then when they change managers and they have a manager who never ever wants to get involved, feels that it's not their job to do that... and essentially isolates themselves as a figurehead over people and everything is delegation, but not any kind of active involvement. That sets up an internal strife for staff too.

It's an internal struggle [within herself] because it's very frustrating; it's hard to understand how they don't want to be helping their staff and be actively involved with their staff 'cause I feel that goes a long way. You know, I hear a lot of people say that people don't have a good work ethic because they don't come to work, they call in. I've even heard people saying about managers and directors 'well, they're calling in sick, they come in whenever they want.' And here we are, we're busy and they stroll in whenever they feel like it. And I've also heard managers and directors say 'well that's why I have that title, or I can do that now. I earned it.' And that just goes against my grain.

This carries over into the way she dresses. There are many days when Ann will wear scrubs, instead of street clothes or suits, even though she has a 'director' title.

I wear scrubs some days because that way... physicians even commented, I noticed that when physicians and even staff with suits... they talk about suits. If I was in a suit everyday, they would frown on that, the [physicians] would even frown on that. And also it gives me the opportunity if I need to talk to a doctor or if I need to go [into a unit] to do something or to find someone, I can... I have my scrubs on.

It is important to Ann that shows the staff that she is willing to follow the rules – the same rules that they are expected to follow.

There was a meeting with the ... managers and we're all sitting in this meeting... there was discussion about taking off during the holidays. On the floors, they're [the staff] are not allowed to take off between Thanksgiving and New Years, full weeks. And one of the managers said 'well let me tell you something, if you take off, the directors, if you take off over that time, the staff are watching that. And there will be, you know, they're watching to see if it's a don't do as I do, do as I say situation. And that will be causing

issues if you do take off and they're not allowed to.' And [another director] made the comment 'that is my title and I earned it and if they don't like it, that's too bad. And if they want my position then they can work hard and get to it and then they can do what they want and they can take off whenever they want to too.' ... I would never react like that. I have a different... and it really turned me against that person... I'll work with that person but I know we're not on that same level playing field.

Family More Important than Career

Ann's family is very important to her – more important to her than her career. She recognizes that those values aren't the same in all people, and that women in management have a harder time with this in today's workplaces.

I think it's come a long way with the gender, I do think though there's still ... when a woman is raised to a very high position, 'I wonder what she did to get that job;' especially if she's attractive, or the bitch. People think that their career is the all important accomplished thing that makes them who they are, their job, their job... because many times their family suffers. Many times the children are affected.

You know, what I leave behind here on earth is my child. And that's another thing, I made that commitment and I will see it through and I want to give up where I can give my daughter what she needs... I look at that as I look on my responsibility as a parent, just like I would take on my responsibility at work. It's sad to see how people let their jobs rule them, that that's what makes them, them. Now I'm not saying when you're at work you don't give your all, certainly I'm saying that you give your all. But that's not what makes you who you are. It's a part of what makes you who you are, but it's not the whole entire picture. And still, I always remember that quote when you're dying and

you're on your deathbed, will you be thinking about I should have finished that paper, I should have completed that analysis? Or what are you going to be thinking about? Some people may be thinking about that; but to me, that's sad.

Choosing Values over Senior Position

At one point in her career, Ann moved into a senior position overseeing a large number of patient care areas. She remained in the senior position for a few years and then stepped down to a middle management position. She talks about that choice as a choosing her values over her career.

I had a time in my career that I was asked to do something that I didn't pursue myself, I was asked to do. It was a very difficult time because there was a lot of internal strife in how I handled this position but I would never quit. And it was even said to me 'you never quit, you never wanted to quit.' And I didn't want to quit. You know I wanted to give my all, but sometimes there are things beyond your control that you have to say 'this is it, I just can't do anymore, I gave my all.'

There was a situation where there was some downsizing of staff, employees and I had to deal with asking certain people to leave because of the downsizing. And that was tough, that was very tough because I knew them personally, I knew their families... I take a lot of pride in knowing that I know a lot of people that I work with. And I feel that's part of the work ethic too, they're not just commodities like on an assembly line and that's what you're expected to do and I feel that that's another piece of it. For me to have to do that, it was very difficult for me. Because I knew personally about the people that I was telling 'I'm sorry, you don't have a job anymore.' It was to a point where you become cold and I couldn't do that. It was eating at me. There were people that I worked with... perhaps

because they didn't know some of the people personally, it didn't affect them. I, I couldn't do that.

A lot of people said to me 'you kept your integrity the whole time when you were in that situation' and that's part of your class, your psyche. And I felt the whole way I'm always going to be looking in the mirror and happy with what I'm doing and always be comfortable. I would never treat anyone any differently than how I would want to be treated.

As a result of the various internal struggles, Ann stepped down. She decided that her integrity, her values learned in her working class home were more important to her than that position. She agreed that the expectations placed on her in that senior position created a struggle inside of her:

It's true because of things that may be asked, that you may be asked to do and it's against your integrity. And you pick your integrity or you pick your career, your position. But in the end, you answer... I remember someone saying to me this entire time, 'when you're on your deathbed, do you think you're going to be thinking about what you did at your job? Or are you going to be thinking about what's important to you, your family, your home, you know your job – is that what you're going to be thinking that you worried about? Well I should have done this or I should've done that at my job? That's not what's going to be important when you're gonna have your last breath on earth. And that's true and I felt I had to keep my integrity and it cost me. But it's okay; it was well worth the cost to give up what I could have had for what I wanted to be.

Ann's Reflections on Conflicts between Her Values and Manager Role

Ann's values learned in her working class home have affected her as a person and a manager. She believes it not only impacts her, it has helped her to relate to her staff.

I think that you have to prove your work ethic, you have to prove yourself and that you cannot, you can't quit. You take what you... you take on what you're responsible for, and you have to see it to the end. And that you work your way up; it's not like something was given to you.

I've proven myself... I didn't just come from the outside and was handed the [XXX] position. So that trust and that work ethic, they knew that I had that, and that I was essentially at their playing field.

Ann agrees that members of the working class are brought up to meet the expectations of those in power and that those in power use their power to control those who are not.

Yes and that's where you have to decide if you want to be controlled. And what is going to be the cost you pay for that. And if you are in the power, do you want to force that power below in a lower level and do things that you know in your heart that you wouldn't have done. That's tough... And that's where you have to decide, is it worth the power or is it worth keeping your integrity if you're struggling with that.

I also think that in that situation, they [those who come from a position of privilege] don't understand those who come from my background and choose to keep their integrity.

'Cause they don't know the background, they don't know the forces behind that integrity, they don't know. Their integrity and what drives them is different from what I felt drove me and what I felt was important with integrity... But I have to realize that what drives them and what's important to them, isn't what I see as what's important... In the end, I realized that's what they need to do to make themselves feel good.

As she reflects on her career, she feels a sense of accomplishment in what she's achieved. And she looks forward to helping others take advantage of opportunities to do the same.

...a sense of accomplishment and also that people felt that I could manage it, that I could handle this position. And sometimes I thought do I really want to do this? You know as a manager you see, you're putting in long hours, you're salaried, you'll see staff, they may put in less hours or the same amount of hours and get paid more than you're getting paid. So is it really worth it?

But I feel a sense of accomplishment that I could really work with them, with the staff, and felt like I was treating them the way they deserved to be treated versus having someone dictating what they needed to do and not looking at where they came from and what they're looking for to accomplish... Looking at it wasn't an easy road for me; it wasn't handed to me... There may be some in that crowd of people that I work with that are looking for the same opportunities.

Ann realizes that she when she left the senior position; she chose her values over power. She had a friend who committed suicide and Ann talks about not ever wanting to get to the point where she felt she couldn't go on.

I had a close friend who was also my mentor. She was in a very high position and she paid the price. I talked about how you pay the price and you have to choose between perhaps the power and the things that you may not agree to in that power and whether you are going to pick the power or your integrity. She paid the price because she had a lot of struggles with ... the power situation... she also came from a working class background... she committed suicide... she was in a very powerful situation that everyone thought she had it all. But did she? And when I was struggling with what I was doing in that situation, I didn't want to get to that point... I never wanted to get to that point in my life where I felt there was no way of turning back.

So the concern when I talk about this something pays in time and if you're expected to give your all at your job, is your home affected? Is that what happened here? We'll never know; and we'll never understand it.

“Nurse by day; Biker by night”

Jennifer’s Story

Jennifer is in a director level position in a patient care area of a community health system in the Mid Atlantic region of the US. She started her career as a registered nurse in a well known health care system in the Midwest and has had several increasingly responsible positions in health care systems in Midwestern, Northeastern and Mid Atlantic states. She currently oversees a specialty patient care services line for the community health system.

A lot of people in health care come from blue collar families...but I think having the street smarts and knowing and understanding...you have to be able to relate to them...you tend to learn a lot from the street...

- Jennifer

Growing Up Working Class

Jennifer grew up on the outskirts of a large city in the Midwest. She was the youngest and only girl in a family of three children; her father was a factory worker in an automobile manufacturing plant, her mom held secretarial or retail jobs.

You have to Work

Jennifer’s mother and father both had strong work ethics, but she believes her father’s work ethic has had the biggest impact on her.

One of the things they always taught was work ethics, and being responsible for work, being accountable for work. In order to get the things in life, you have to work, you have to earn money. So you know calling in sick was frowned upon. He [her dad] would go to work all the time, even on days when he’d be sick, he’d get up and go to work; same with my mother.

I think it was really my dad who was the one with the work values and the ethics. He always stressed how important it was that you have to go to work. So whatever you want to do, however you want to live your life, you have to make money so you can be independent, don't want to rely on other people.

This stressing of the value and importance of work was not necessarily overtly stated. It was more a matter of the modeling that was done.

There wasn't really a whole lot of conversations. It would be more of ... I think back in the time period when I grew up it was 'you listened to your parents or else.' If I wanted to call in sick for a few days to play hooky from school or something like that, he would be angry and he would yell about it and you know 'that's not the right thing to do' and you whipped yourself back into shape.

They were definitely blue collar people. My mother is very much a job hopper and my dad is a solid, stay in one place for years...because he knew my mom was a job hopper (chuckling) and I think he knew he was the breadwinner for the family. It was important that he took care of us financially. You know, that was one of his biggest concerns.

Education as the Key to a Better Future

Education as the key to a successful future was stressed in Jennifer's family. Her father especially, stressed the importance of getting an education to a better life, even though at times it was a hardship for the family.

My dad was very supportive of all of us kids going to college. He wanted us to; he always said he wanted us to have a better life than what he could provide for us.

I had two older brothers and one of them went through college that my parents paid for and he got his bachelor's degree. My other brother became a [clinical technician], so they

put him through that program. But all of us three kids...we all went on for further education.

There was a time when my parents were getting divorced, and my mother because they were getting divorced, they weren't going to be able to pay for my tuition any longer to go to nursing school. And my dad said, 'well you're going to go and I'll figure it out no matter what.' My mom was like, 'well, don't have the money; you'll just have to quit.' And my dad said 'absolutely not' and he found a way to continue to help put me through nursing school initially. It was a challenge for my family financially.

Jennifer believes that the value of education from her family background is also instilled in her.

I think the value of how much, how important... the emphasis on school. My parents really emphasized going to school. Neither of them made a whole lot of money and sent me to a Catholic School, a private school ...they sent me to the best places that I could go. They always encouraged me to keep going so I think that the encouragement, the support there...helping me to get a car when I needed a car so I could get back and forth to my coop job and to go to college at the same time as going to high school. So I think there's a lot of support there.

I think [those values] carry over now, when I look at my own family. As far as having one daughter who is nine and how important school is and emphasizing with her ...and encouraging her to go to college, you know and just how important schooling is. I think about how I've been trying to instill in her those beliefs so they are passed on. ...

I'm still interested in furthering my education....timing is always a factor once children are involved. I still believe that a good education is what gets you a good success in life. And I think as I have gone through my career as a nurse, and then into management, I

think education has also been a piece behind that.... I definitely think that what my parents taught me was true, even though that's not what they did themselves. But they believed it.

A Chaotic Childhood

Jennifer's parents met when her father was in the Air Force. Her mother is from England. Their marriage was rocky and therefore, so was her childhood at times.

Growing up with my parents, they didn't have a real solid marriage. They were divorced maybe two or three times and kept getting remarried (laughing). It was definitely a challenge.

I can recall one incident that stuck in my head was when my mother left and went back to England. Our parents were going to split up and my dad took, I had two older brothers, I was little, very little at the time. And we were sitting in a restaurant and we were voting 'who wants mom to come back home.' And both my brothers were like 'no, we don't want her to come back home' because they understood the fighting and all that. I was still too young and I was the only one who wanted my mother to come home; so my dad let her come home. But then he burned our passports to make sure that she couldn't take us overseas. It was very much a challenge with my parents and very unpredictable as to what was going to happen.

I think one of the things I picked up from that is that I will never be in a position where I cannot take care of myself, the way my mother would be....I'm not going to be in a position where I need to have a man take care of me.... I can do my own thing and I don't have to ask someone for money so I can buy groceries, or give me half your paycheck. I think that probably affected me.

Because with my parents splitting up all the time, getting married and divorced three or four times to each other, my mother was always struggling. She was always ‘how am I going to pay the bills; I can’t help the children now; I can’t help you pay for school’ and you know she was struggling. And I don’t ever want to be in that kind of position. So if I was ... divorced, I know I could be independent and it’s not going to alter the lifestyle I’ve established for my daughter. So I think that has impacted me personally, all the divorces and stuff; I’m not going to get into that boat. I don’t want to have to rely on anybody.

Jennifer’s parents had very different personalities. During the times she spent with them individually, she had many diverse types of experiences.

My father was truly the country person, likes to fish and listen to country music; where my mother was this classical opera person, waking us up in the morning to opera music and blasting it to get us out of bed.

I think a lot of married couples tend to be very similar, you know they like to do the same things together. So then when as kids grow up, they tend to do the same things with their parents. They don’t have one parent going in one direction and another parent going in another direction, doing completely opposite and different things.

Jennifer spent a lot of time with her father. He was an alcoholic.

My dad being a [auto plant] worker, my dad also drank a lot. Even when he was an alcoholic, he always went to work; so he was a functioning alcoholic.

What he would do, after work all the guys would go to the bar together and I would go to the bar and [when old enough] drink with all the workers. Here I was this 21 year old, drinking with these 40 and 50 year olds.

I think I hung around with people a lot older than me all the time. I mean my dad was actually like my best friend...I'd be on bowling teams, even horse races. I'd do a lot of those things with him. My dad used to take me trout fishing; I'd have the waders on up to my hips walking through the streams trout fishing. You know I even know what sunglasses to have to see the fish through the water.

The times that Jennifer spent with her mother yielded very different experiences.

She'd always be the one to sit and watch Jeopardy; we'd watch Jeopardy every night and she could answer all the questions. She was the one that was big into reading; so when it came to reading and doing the studying, that's where I got my other influence from. She was the one that got me into reading all the novels...keep up to date on all the literature and all that kind of stuff.

My mom is big into psychics. I grew up going to psychic fairs with my mother; ... she lives by the psychics sometimes... I can't remember if any of the events came true. But they were very good about picking up things about people I think. It may just be premonition rather than being psychic ... sometimes that gives you a bit of motivation too... to sometimes confirm that you are going down the right path.

My mother tried to teach me to read French at the opera. She made me usher with her at operas; that's how I saw all the operas...when you usher, you go to them for free. We had to wear white dresses and we handed out the books and I got to go backstage and saw them put on the opera makeup and see how they do all that stuff.

Now my dad, we would go to George Jones' concerts...you know, George Jones the country, country concerts. It was definitely night and day.

Independence and Rebellion

Jennifer's parents put a lot of emphasis on work. Growing up she spent much time alone when her parents were working; this fostered a strong sense of independence.

I think growing up with my dad working full time and my mom working a lot, I became really independent.... a lot of 'have to make my own decisions.' I was a latchkey child; I'd come home from school and no one was there. I had to make sure I got my homework done and get myself something to eat sometimes. It became very much a lot of independence I had from a younger age.

So I grew up being independent and actually had a hard time with people telling me what to do because my parents weren't there most of the time to tell me what to do. I did have a lot of resentment against authority figures...it was like being invincible...it was like that growing up and into my teenage years; I can do anything.

Sometimes that streak of independence turned to rebellion. At times, this got Jennifer into trouble with her parents.

I was in high school and my parents went away just to visit my grandmother and they said they were going to leave me alone, take care of the house, be good. I was quite the rebel, very big rebel. I said okay, so I had my party, put together this big party and a fight broke out in the house. A guy had on iron knuckles and his fist went through the wall; the chair at the kitchen table got busted and of course, the cops showed up. I thought 'oh my god, what am I going to do now.' So my friends and I, we patched up the wall, we did pretty good there. And then the chair, what we did with the chair is we glued the chair and then the chair was brown and we took a crayon, a brown crayon and melted the crayon on the cracks so you couldn't see the cracks. And then we put the chair in a spot

where it was up against the wall where it was like my chair because that was my seat.

You would never know it was broken. Well my brother comes home, my older brother and...Ratted me out; [I] got in huge trouble. But I didn't care; did it again the next time.

That rebellious streak also got Jennifer into trouble with other authority figures.

[At the Catholic school she attended}I was very rebellious, cutting classes, making me do detention time on the weekends. You know, a Catholic school, I thought it would be fun to drink a bottle of Blue Nun wine in the bathroom, 'cause it was a Catholic school (laughing)...and they were all nuns. My girlfriend and I were drinking Blue Nun in the bathroom. Yeah, we got caught...and we were smoking, smoking cigarettes in the bathroom, drinking Blue Nun. Got caught by a nun! Oh yeah, I was very rebellious; very rebellious.

Jennifer's Reflections on the Impact of Growing up Working Class

The diversity in her life experiences growing up has affected Jennifer to this day.

It became just different life experiences...I think what it's done for me is that it's very much made me where I can just sort of go out and do anything. Because it's exposure; I think the exposure really makes me an odd individual I guess (laughing)...you sure do meet different groups of people in those circles... one in a tux and one in cowboy hats.

Jennifer also believes that the strong work ethic she learned from her parents has impacted her in her working life and career.

I believe any job you're in, any job I'm in I tried to the best that I could, to the best of my ability. You know that's something my dad would always say, 'just as long as you do your best' and give everything a hundred percent. So I think that was one of the strong

messages I got from my parents, my mom and dad, was work ethics. I grew up with work is the priority; you can't survive without it. I think I ended up being a workaholic.

Career and Manager Experience

Jennifer's interest in a health care career began in high school.

During my high school I decided I wanted to work in the medical profession; they offered vocational for medical assisting. It was a two year vocational in high school. So I took that and as part of that vocational was on the job training. In my 11th grade, I went to medical assisting and then in 12th grade, I would go to class half the day and the other half the day I would work. So I started working for a orthopedic surgeon and I became his transcriptionist as well as his medical assistant to help put casts on, take casts off, do that kind of fun stuff. I liked medical assisting so that's when I decided I wanted to go into nursing. I started my prep classes at [the local] community college in the 12th grade and got accepted right out of high school into nursing. I went to a diploma program, a three year program which involves going to the community college and then doing the rest of the training at the hospital.

After graduating as a diploma nurse, Jennifer worked as a staff nurse in a post operative specialty area in a well known health care system in the Midwest, near where she grew up. She was ultimately send to a European country for a year to learn new procedures for applying the patient care skills to specific populations in preparation for enhancing the hospital's program.

Jennifer's Transition from Staff Nurse to Management

Upon her return from a year in Europe, Jennifer transitioned into a management position.

While I had been away, they had decided to ... build a separate unit which they did not have at [the health care system] when I was there. So when I got back, I had the

opportunity to apply for the Assistant Nurse Manager position; 'cause they were looking for an experienced manager at the time to become Nurse Manager. I applied for that job and I got that job, as the Assistant Nurse Manager.... That was my first experience in management.

After six months, the Nurse Manager of the unit left. The staff and physicians supported Jennifer in her desire to move into that role.

To be a Nurse Manager at [the hospital], you had to have a Bachelor's Degree. I did not have that; I was a diploma nurse. I got along so well with the staff that the staff put together this big letter and everybody signed it, along with the physicians and surgeons to have me become the Nurse Manager of the unit. They gave that to the Nursing VP who calls me into her office and says they would be willing to put me into the Nurse Manager role for a period of one year, but I had to get my Bachelor's Degree. If I did not get it within a certain time frame, then I would have to step down. So I said, 'okay, fine'... I became the Nurse Manager and went to school to get my Bachelor's Degree.

After about five years in that role, the health system restructured and eliminated the Nurse Manager role. Jennifer decided to apply for a new role that the hospital was developing.

So all the Nurse Managers and all the Assistant Nurse Managers had to bid on the new positions... I wanted to become a [job specific] analyst – it was a new role for the hospital and because it was a new role, those that applied and who were given the position was given the time line... to get your MBA within a certain time frame or you step down. In addition what the hospital did then is they worked with [a local university] and brought in a fast track MBA program ... so we could get our MBAs within a year.

After getting married, Jennifer moved to a health care system in an urban area in the Northeast where she oversaw a number of patient care areas and had the opportunity to work on the building of a specialty hospital. After two years, she moved to a well known health care system in the Mid Atlantic region, where again she oversaw a number of specialty patient care areas. After two years, she moved to the community health system in the Mid Atlantic where she currently works. “I got hired as an [administrator in the nursing area] there and then as the program developed and things progressed, I actually wound up to where I am now, which is a [administrator of a specialty service line]”.

Jennifer's Management Style: Using her Street Smarts

Jennifer believes that her working class background has helped her in her manager roles. Her background and experiences growing up help her identify problems that her staff may be encountering. This affects the way she manages them.

I think another thing that has helped me be successful in management is my ‘street smarts’. A lot of people in health care, do I think come from blue collar families... I think knowing a lot about the everyday environment I grew up in... [City she grew up in] was a very rough area, there were things you know, drugs, alcohol, that were very accessible. I can pick up on someone who... I had an employee one time who had a drug issue and I picked it up right away... You tend to learn a lot from the streets.

I think coming from the blue collar has actually helped me in management; ‘cause I didn’t have everything handed to me. I had to go through things the hard way. You know, racking up the VISA bills.... so when I have someone tell me they’re in debt and can’t make the payments, I understand what they’re talking about there. For a lot of things, I’ve been there.

Being able to relate to people, I think, helps in management... it helps because sometimes to get where you want to take a team, you know what they're going through, you know how to work with them, you know how to pick out their strengths, pick out their weaknesses, you know to continue to build on their strengths and route them in the right direction. You know someone that's going through a divorce or their brother's in a drug rehab, and you know what's affecting them emotionally, you can sort of help them through work... help them at work and help them achieve what you want them to achieve as well... so I think that helps a lot.

This knowing of her staff on a personal level has led Jennifer to a democratic style of management; she thinks it is very important to get the input from her staff into decisions that affect them.

Although [her management style] can be a little dictatorial at times, I'm pretty much though, pretty democratic. I like to sit down with people, talk about it, get people's input about let's move in this direction and how the majority of people want more to make it successful. Because if you just make your own decisions; they don't work. I think one of the things I learned very early on ... was knowing that I had gotten along so well with the staff and they respected me as the Assistant [Nurse Manager], because I just worked with them and understood their jobs. I think having that kind of support from people showed me that having the people involved who you work with can really make a difference, 'cause you have the whole support of the group then. That is something that I have never ever forgotten.

So I think about that as I go through different types of management positions: who am I working with and how can I get them involved and what levels can they be involved in? I

still go out and do rounds all the time and I know people on a first name basis; I know their dogs, I know some of their children and I get down to more of a personal level. And I think that's very important.

The relationship then brings out the teamwork. If you can relate to people, and they can understand where you're coming from, and you can understand where they're coming from, it's much easier to try and build a consensus toward 'okay we have to make a change and we can do this together.'

In addition to having empathy and understanding for the sometimes difficult lives of her employees, growing up as a kid from a blue collar background has enhanced Jennifer's ability to work with very different types of people.

I think because my parents were so much doing their own thing, I did end up on the streets a lot; I did end up running around, I wouldn't say in gangs, but we had our gang of friends growing up, sort of groups. And you learned a lot about what happens on the streets. You learn how to sometimes just take care of yourself. Because when your parents are getting divorced and remarried all the time, when one's going in one direction and one's hanging out in the bar, you become very independent, that latch key child.

A lot of nurses come from blue collar families, a lot of them remain at the bedside and that's great, we need them. But I think having the street smarts and knowing and understanding... you know nurses' aides and unit secretaries – people who have no college education and you have to be able to relate to them as well. You get such different levels of people who work in a hospital. I think all those different experiences have made me able to interact at all different levels. So you know, I sort of think that's what helps me to be able to communicate with people.

Jennifer's exposure to different types of people while growing up working class has also affected her management style when it comes to dealing with employee issues.

I think I can be a good judge of character. I can give you an example. There was an aide... he could be a very good aide, he worked really well with [the patients] and their families, but he had an anger management problem; he actually punched another employee. I terminated him, but he was in the union so they filed a grievance as an inappropriate termination. The VP of Nursing... decided to overturn the termination and I had to bring him back. I told her that regardless of whether he was a bad or good employee, I said I know his personality and I don't think that's a good decision. A month later he punched the same employee again. And, I had to terminate him again... It's not like I wanted to go 'told you' but I think, you know, I've learned how to read people.

When you've been on that side of the fence, you tend to understand people a bit better; what they go through and how do you get that low sometimes, when you could, you know, you're going in the wrong direction.... I think people can pull themselves out of the rut. You know I have people tell me 'well you don't know what it's like'; and I want to tell them, 'yeah, I do.' But I don't say that.

Reflections on her Class Background and her Management Style

Jennifer believes that her working class background and childhood experiences on the 'street' have definitely affected the way she manages.

I'm going to do what I want to do. So I think that impacted how I got into management because I'd see things and they would annoy me, 'I can do that better.' You know, put your money where your mouth is at and try it versus being one who all was going to do was complaining about it all the time..... I think that I have made a difference.

I do know what it's like; I do know how you can pull yourself up. I had no one help me but myself; that's the only person that's going to help you is yourself. So I think that made an impact on where I'm going and what I'm doing, definitely.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

Jennifer admits that at times her values learned growing up working class can conflict with the expectations of her as a manager.

Problems with Authority

Jennifer's rebellion against authority has not always been well received by those in higher management positions.

When I was at [well known Midwestern Hospital], this was when authority was sometimes an issue and why I wanted to go higher up the chain, I challenged the decision of the VP of Nursing when I was a Nurse Manager. She called me on the carpet and said 'who are you to challenge me?' And she was actually threatening to terminate me. Well it turned out, in the long run that I was accurate. She had hired a new director of [the specialty hospital], did not consider me for the position because I was in a Nurse Manager role and I had wanted to move up. She brought in somebody else who I had heard had been terminated, fired from a previous job and was not recommended. So I challenged that hire, and it turned out to be true; she was terminated. She turned out to be a flop and they ended up getting rid of her.... because she [the VP] didn't like this, she threatened to terminate me, and put me on some kind of warning.

In another situation, Jennifer's senior manager took credit for a project that Jennifer had developed and implemented. In this situation, she made sure that her superior's superior knew the truth about the situation.

If someone else takes the recognition for something someone else does... that has happened multiple times... that pisses me off (chuckles). A program that I implemented... that was one of my goals when I was hired that I wanted to implement... so I worked on pulling that together ... [another employee] at the time helped me, so the two of us worked really hard on that. And the VP who I reported to reported to Senior Management that it was her project, her idea, all the content was hers and we were just sort of putting it together for her in the packet. Where she wasn't involved with it at all; we did all the leg work behind it and how do you set it up... and so on, we did all the ground work. [An administrator] told me that the VP told him nobody else had anything to do with that program; that it was her idea, her initiative and that she was the lead on that and took all the credit. He said he knew there were some other people behind it, so I informed him who those other people were.

Another area where she hasn't always agreed with those in higher positions of authority has to do with an aspect that she calls common sense.

I do think that you need to have common sense. You know sometimes some decisions are common sense decisions. And the book smarts doesn't always do it. You can have the book smarts but if you don't know how to act it out or work it out and put some common sense to it, the book smarts doesn't necessarily work for people. You can have people with all the highest degrees and gone through school and never really worked and they're definitely book smart and then you can tell you a lot from the book but then they can't interact with people. You know and they don't know how to function with people. If you would have included us or participated in some group evaluation instead of making a

decision by a select group of people... yeah to me that's just common sense; involve the users.

One of Jennifer's goals is to get to a senior management position. She'd like the opportunity to make a difference at that level: "You have to keep your mouth shut at times. See that's why my goal is to get at that senior management level so that I can eliminate some of that."

Perceptions of Others of her as a Manager

Jennifer believes that the way she has learned to behave, her reactions to situations and the values she has learned as a result of her blue collar background have conflicted with the expectations that others have of her as a manager. In particular, these have conflicted with the expectations of those in more powerful positions within the organization.

I think a lot of the class stuff, when you get into a certain position, there's a certain way that you're expected to act, to behave; I haven't always fitted that mold. And I think that's sort of been some of my struggles, which might be because of some of my street life showing hasn't given me all that finesse that maybe other people have had; you have to have a certain style to get into those upper level positions.

You know when you work with [administration], or when you report to a VP, you know when you report to that person, you're expected to act in a certain way. Well I don't always act the way they would like me to act and then you sort of get labeled as a troublemaker or you're the squeaky wheel sometimes. So I think that has given me some challenges. I think that sometimes the people who are in those positions because they've had I would say a more sheltered life, they haven't seen as many different sides of the fence. They don't get it and I think sometimes that's what causes some hospitals to not do well in certain areas. If you have problems with nurse recruitment or you have problems

with the staff, you know understanding what they're looking for; you can't relate to them because you haven't been there, you don't really get it.

You're expected to behave and act in a certain way when you're told something and you're thinking, 'no that's not how I want to respond.' And sometimes I don't; I respond the way I want to respond. I'll call people to the carpet on it; people don't like that. I have gone up the hill (chuckles) and I've gone down. I think that sometimes that puts barriers to me going up that ladder.

Jennifer also believes that her personal life choices may have an impact on her ability to move up into a senior management role.

I think too, who you're married to influences your job. It influences what level you get to. Because if they don't accept your husband, they don't accept you into higher level positions at times because you can't mingle... who you should be married to and what you two should be doing together as a couple. All of my husbands had longer hair than I do and ride motorcycles. Doesn't quite fit the senior management style.

Personal versus Professional Life

Even though she thinks that her class background has helped her in her manager roles, Jennifer believes that the experiences she had growing up have impacted her personal life today.

I think some of the family stuff there... I think it's impacting me in my personal life. I think personally, it's affected me. In my professional career, I think it helped me to be successful; it helped me be unsuccessful in my personal life. So that's been a challenge. Because I've very career oriented, if there's someone, if I'm with a guy who is not going to support that direction, well then he can just take a hike. That could be one of my challenges with relationships too; I tend to be a little bit more on the dominant side. Men

don't like that; they want to be the dominant one. You know, we need their help. No I don't.

Jennifer has made a conscious decision to choose her career over relationships with men.

I have terrible relationships; I'm on my third marriage. I did learn not to marry the same person though (chuckles), it doesn't work. My personal life is such a mess all the time; my professional life is what's stable. And that's something that I've done well; that's something I can be proud of and have succeeded in. My personal life is a shambles....

It is important to Jennifer to separate her professional life and her life outside of work. She is "completely" different with her friends and extended family than she is at work.

There's a lot of stuff I used to do when I rode with clubs, motorcycle clubs. I had my own Harley... Both of my first two husbands were in motorcycle clubs.

When I worked at [Midwestern Hospital] I was known as the nurse by day, the biker by night. Everybody loved it, 'cause even the Assistant Nurse Manager who I hired when I was a Nurse Manager, she ended up getting a bike. So then we'd ride together.

I was watching *American Idol* the other night and they've got that girl on there, she's a nurse... who rides a bike at night. She's a Harley Mama. I'm like, 'oh god, I wish I had that bike.'

I am a different person at work because of the physicians; I have had the respect of the physicians at every hospital I've worked in. I get along well with them. The like me, I have good relationships and then different relationships outside of work (chuckles)...

Jennifer's Reflections on Conflicts between her Working Class Values and her Manager Role

Jennifer states the goals she has set for herself may be more difficult because she's a woman.

I think I see myself as a woman in management because I'm in nursing that that is very acceptable. I think the higher you go up the chain though, women in management only happen at the VP of Nursing level. But when you try to get into an operational or COO or CEO level, it's typically men.

I think it's harder for women to advance to that level. I think there are opportunities to do that; I think it's happening more and more often. But I do think that it's much more of a struggle. And I think that in the health care environment, so many of the women in management are nurses, the VP of Nursing position or CNO is an easy position [for a female nurse] to transition to. But truly needing that operational piece to get you to the COO level, you need to get it in your background.... I didn't want to limit my background to just nursing. So I think figuring out where you want to go and setting goals for yourself; you know I set goals for myself and where I want to go in my career and positions I wanted to go for.

She is hopeful that the skills she learned growing up working class that have carried over to her management style: the strength of the relationships she has built at work, the value of getting input and building teams and the democratic management skills she utilizes, will be helpful as she continues to strive to move up the career ladder

Depending on whom I'm dealing with, if it's physicians, I've learned I have to function one way and with staff depending on the type of situation.... my management style can be altered with what's happening. It's a very situational type of leadership.

I think because men are always viewed as the stronger mind in health care, physicians are predominantly male, and having to deal with physicians; my impression is that [administration] is going to look at it [from the perspective of] a physician. Now

fortunately I have had good relationships with physicians. And I've done that in all of my positions because I know the importance behind that; I've seen the importance behind that... to be able to work with them. You know not to just blow smoke up their ass, but to be able to say 'this is wrong, that's wrong and how are we going to fix it, how are we going to work it out?' I've learned that having that relationship with the physicians, just the male counterpart is extremely important.

Jennifer's independence is very important to her. She is very ambitious and although she said she thinks her professional life has been successful, she doesn't really believe she's 'made it.'

I don't think I've made it yet. And the reason I thought that is where I wanted to go with my education and being able to fulfill that which I haven't done yet, to go beyond a Masters' Degree and really being in a senior management level position. Those are sort of my goals that I haven't made yet. I've had all the other goals to get me where I'm at now; but that still doesn't mean I've made it yet... when you accomplish something that gets you closer to that it feels really good. Um, I never really share it with anybody though. It's more of an internal thing because my family doesn't understand my job and to try and explain it to my mother, I just don't want to talk about it... she just doesn't understand, you know what I mean?

“A Whole Different Sense of Satisfaction”

Amy’s Story

Amy is in a director level position over multiple patient care areas in a community hospital in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. She started her career as a registered nurse in a small, rural community hospital in a specialty area and has had various management level positions at a few different hospital systems within this Mid-Atlantic region. She was promoted into her current director level position from a specialty area within this health system.

In earlier years as a manager ... there wasn’t so much paperwork...I actually worked more time as staff than I did on administrative duties because that’s just the balance that was required. There’s a whole different sense of satisfaction with doing that, with doing patient care than there is doing paperwork. It’s two totally different things for me... I still miss it.

- Amy

Growing Up Working Class

Amy grew up in a small rural town in the central part of a state in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. Her father worked in a print shop and her mother was a secretary. Amy has a younger sister.

I lived in a small, rural community...my father was ...a printer. He worked at the local newspaper as ... the foreman of the print shop at the newspaper. And that’s where he met my mother who worked there after she graduated from high school. ... My mom was a stay at home mom until I think my sister went to kindergarten. Then she went to work as a secretary in the courthouse, I believe.

You Went to Work

Amy learned a strong work ethic from her parents. Not only did you work hard, you worked when you were expected to work, you didn't miss work.

My father ...worked all the time. He had a part time job actually [in addition to his full time job in the print shop]. He worked in a little convenience store, I guess you'd call it... it was small, jam packed full of stuff store; cigarettes, soda, candy, magazines... which was actually right beside the newspaper place.

Even if he wasn't at work, he was at home working...he had a huge garden that constantly worked in the summer time. He loved to paint so when the weather was bad, he was always painting something. He was constantly busy.

Although my mom was a stay at home mom, when she went to work she... didn't miss work, strong work ethic.

Amy believes that she has carried that strong work ethic and the expectation that you would not miss work with her today.

Today we seem to see a lot of the younger generation, at least from my perspective, who don't seem to think a thing about calling off from work. It just never occurred to me to do that; when I had part time jobs throughout high school, you were scheduled to work and you went to work. You didn't call off... we never had a discussion about it and I don't know what would have happened if I had been someone who called off; I don't know how my parents would have reacted to that. It was not an issue.

Times that I have not felt up to par – had a cold, bad cold or sore throat, that sort of thing, I just come to work. It's hard for me to call off sick from work. I guess I see that as being part of a strong work ethic.

Watching your Pennies

Amy's parents divorced when she was young. One of the results of Amy's father leaving the household was the need to be very cost-conscious and frugal regarding money and material things.

After my parents were divorced ... we were more or less living on a secretary's salary, which wasn't very much. I remember the envelopes that she {her mother} put her money in, her paycheck in – so much for food and this and that. She still does that to this day. But really, both my sister and I laugh about it, but speaking of frugality, we were allowed to have one bottle of what we called 'pop' back then... one pop a week. So really you'd get an 8 pack of Pepsi and they'd last 8 weeks 'cause you could only have one a week. And one bag of chips, that was the only snack we had. I mean we didn't starve or anything like that but she just really watched.

This sense of frugality affects her today.

I think that I learned from that and I'm probably not as a result of that as frugal as I should be... but that was certainly a value and as I think about her parents, they were the same way... just the value of money and being very cost conscious.

My mother and grandmother always used to say 'if you watch your pennies, the dollars will watch themselves.' And my grandmother always used to have a little dish on her dresser where she and my grandfather put their pennies. And that's what they'd say, 'you watch your pennies and the dollars will watch themselves.' And I think about it a lot; I don't have a thing on my dresser, but I do have a container that I do put my pennies in. And I think the point was, you watch what you're spending, you watch the little things,

the big things will take care of themselves. I don't know that I always follow that philosophy, but certainly I think of it often.

The Importance of Integrity

Amy recalls other expectations that her parents had for her behavior. These expectations were communicated and understood, but not necessarily by direct discussion.

Not that I can recall specific discussions about those but there was an expectation for sure that we understood. You don't lie, you don't cheat, you don't steal... those sorts of things. And my sister and I neither one associated with, I suppose by choice with anyone who was like that.

Someone's integrity, you know being true to your word, that sort of thing, following through. That sort of comes together ... was also part of those values that I lived with.

And I still think those are important...

Amy believes those values carry over to her lifestyle and expectations today.

As far as valuing integrity and being true to your word, I think that whether it's at work...at home... at church... dinner with people, when... we haven't been true to our word, maybe not purposely but for some reason what we thought we could make a commitment to, what we thought we could follow through on, we can't; that feeling that I'm left with when that happens is not a feeling that is good; it doesn't make you feel good about yourself. And that's why ... being true to your word is important, because the feeling that you have when you can follow through with what you said you would do... is just so much better, you feel so much better about yourself; it's just the right thing to do. It's just sort of one of those gut feelings where you just sort of feel 'yuck' (makes a face). That wasn't good... the fear that someone may have lost respect for you because of that...

or the fear that they don't think as highly of you as they might have otherwise... that they won't trust you the next time or in another situation.... it's not something you would want... it's not a position I like to be in.

As I think back to my family environment, I certainly could say that's not a value that my father had. But perhaps that has made me more sensitive to that idea of integrity; maybe I've learned a lesson about it from observation.

Her Unsettled Childhood

Amy's father was active in the union that represented the print shop at the newspaper. Consequently, he had a negative view of management. This also created a problem for him with his family, ultimately leading to his estrangement from them. Amy's parents divorced when she was twelve.

My father, what little I do remember about conversations I would hear, discussions I would hear, because he was so involved with the union, there was always this union-management thing going on. He didn't ever have much good to say about management...

My father's role was foreman and he was very active in the union... which actually created a big chasm between him and his grandfather. ... When my father got involved with the union, grandfather basically said 'I don't agree with that and if you don't get out of that' (makes slashing movement across throat). And that's basically what happened. He was really against the union, my great grandfather.

Probably the demise of my father in terms of his, maybe not from his perspective but from mine, life ... it just really went downhill. He was not somebody who, now over the years seems like he fit in with the rest of his family. He kind of became an outcast, the wayward child, got married five times...

She remembers growing up and realizing that she didn't have as much as other kids.

When I think of some of the parents of friends that I had when we were younger and in school, grade school, I think there was more of a class distinction... I think some of that might relate directly back to the fact that there was usually a difference in financial status as well. That those kids who came from families whose parents were presidents of companies or physicians or attorneys always dressed better, were always the more popular kids perhaps. They were the ones who had the cars and could drive themselves to school ... versus those of us whose parents didn't have those sorts of jobs and we rode the school bus, we didn't drive cars to school. Well, we didn't have an extra car. And I only had one pair of jeans; of course back then we weren't allowed... the school only allowed you to wear jeans on Friday; Friday was jeans day. So I had one pair of jeans and I wore that pair of jeans every Friday.

Amy's Reflections on her Working Class Life

Amy believes that for the most part, the values she grew up with still impact her today.

They have with the exception of, I'm probably not as frugal as I should be or as I was then. And as I grew up to be and as my sister is, very frugal; to the point of irritation on my part... but outside of that, I'd say yea, I still think I have a very strong work ethic and I'm pretty pleased that my son I also think has that.... You know he doesn't call off; he goes to work with a cold, a headache, that sort of thing. I think we've instilled that in him as well. We're very active in our church, yeah as I think about it, most of those values have stuck with me.

Growing up without having a lot of things as compared to some of the others in her school makes her realize that it isn't always the material things that define a person. Amy believes it's internal.

How someone dresses, the house they live in, the things that you might think identify the class, but that person belongs to another lower or higher or whatever are the obvious things that we probably judge someone on. But there is that other class, that other word... but the other side to that which is not the exterior but the interior... you hear people say 'she's got class;' that to me is the internal which is different because someone can be low class from what you see about them, but they can have class.

Career and Manager Experience

Amy became interested in health care as a career when she was in high school. Her great grandfather paid for the grandchildren to go on to school, but there were stipulations...

Our great grandfather left a trust fund for all the grandchildren for education, but there were stipulations; you had to be a teacher, a minister, a missionary or a nurse.

I always wanted to be a teacher; my grandmother was a teacher. But at some point... I think it was my junior year of high school; I had a change of heart and I don't remember why. I just remember that I felt like I wanted to understand more how to remain healthy... my mother, not that she was ever a sickly person, but going to the doctor, pugh (makes a face), you're not that sick, that sort of mentality and ... that bothered me. I think that's what it was; finally, I just wanted to understand how to be healthy. And I thought that was one way of doing it, plus my education would be paid for if I was a nurse. So that played into it as well.

I don't know if my [great] grandfather hadn't done that, I'm not sure what I might have done. I might have still gone on, but I don't know.... So I went to [Regional medical center] school of nursing... I chose there because the great grandfather who had set up the trust fund went there when he was diagnosed with cancer... was a 2 year, 24 month

nursing program. It was around the calendar year so we didn't have the summers off... So when I graduated from nursing school I went back home and went to work in our community hospital. And I went to work in [a specialty area] because there were no other openings. I wanted med surg, but there was nothing open in that, all I could get was [the specialty area] full time. I took it and said I'd transfer to med surg; well I never did.

From Staff Nurse and Union President to Management

Amy worked in the specialty unit of the local community for several years and became involved with the union representing the employees there.

I ended up being the president of the union and now that I'm saying that how weird is that since my father was so active in the union... While I was still [union] president, I was pregnant, and in the midst of labor negotiations and I felt like I couldn't deal with all of that. So I resigned as president... went and had [her son] and when I came back to work, they offered me a nurse management position. ... That's how I got into management.

Amy worked as a manager at that community hospital in the town where she grew up for several years. Then due to her husband's job she moved to another area of that state. She went into an assistant manager role at that time; it was the only manager role she could find. But she didn't like being the assistant.

My husband had been working in [large city in another part of the state] and coming home on weekends, and he got a promotion in his company and he needed to be closer. So we came to [regional city closer to his work area]. And I worked; the only position I could find in management was [large regional hospital] in the [specialty area] as the assistant nurse manager.

And I thought, well okay, that's no problem. But I hated it because after being a manager and going to the assistant, I thought 'aah, nahh, I want to call the shots.' I didn't want that middle spot, I liked being in control. I had a manager who was pretty [ineffective], nice lady but... so that was very frustrating to me....

As a result of this dissatisfaction, Amy began looking for a manager position with other health care systems.

So when this position opened [at her current employer], it was called [Specialty Unit] Coordinator and I interviewed for it and wound up getting the position and came here and look here I am...

That was a manager role; that's what they called it back then but it was at the level of Nurse Manager. At some point ... they changed the title to Nurse Manager and then they gave me [another related specialty area of nursing] ... and then they changed the title to Director... and then I took this role [overseeing a number of patient care areas].

In her years as a manager on a nursing unit, Amy would often step in and provide patient care when needed.

It was different then, having been more clinical, I could step in and do things that I might also expect them to do from a skills perspective... I always enjoyed getting back to the bedside. I really did ... and I still miss it.

As a manager, the longer I worked here as a manager, the less I was able to go back and be at the bedside... In earlier years as a manager... there was actually more time to be out as staff and I actually worked more time as staff than I did on administrative duties because that's just the balance that was required. There's a whole different sense of satisfaction with doing patient care that there is doing paperwork. It's two totally

different feelings for me.... Even to the point of my interactions with patients now certainly aren't with nursing care but more of customer satisfaction, you know, visiting patients. Even though the visit maybe hasn't been as pleasant, because it's been a complaint, it's still a whole different sense of, I don't know if it's satisfaction or accomplishment to be able to go in and interact with a patient as opposed to the staff or interacting with peers or at my desk. It's just almost energizing in some ways to interact with patients.

Amy's Management Style: Passionate about Work Ethic

Amy believes that her working class background and the values she learned as a result, impact her style as a manager today. She is especially passionate about work ethic.

I think it does, yeah. Again that work ethic; nothing makes me angrier than to have these attendance issues. People call in, 'I have a hangnail' (chuckles), I'm exaggerating, but you know what I mean, 'I have a headache this morning, I won't be in.' Take two Tylenol and get in here, you know.

Although Amy is in a position now where she doesn't routinely do patient care, she expects to work hard, and she expects that the staff work hard as well.

I don't totally support the idea that I wouldn't ask my staff to do something that I wouldn't do... I do and I don't agree with that. I don't necessarily agree when it's something they need to do and I'm not capable of doing it. For example, now in my position, I need to ask them to carry out their clinical responsibilities or I may ask someone to go from one unit to another to accomplish a skill, let's say an IV for example. Someone can't get an IV started and I may ask someone who I know is very good at IVs to go and do that. I'm not going to go do that IV; it would take me too many attempts...

But on the other hand... I would not ask someone to work, to put all their effort into what it is that they need to do and not expect myself to do the same thing. So from that standpoint, I do agree that I need to be willing to work to the level that I expect staff to. Amy prefers a collaborative management style, getting and giving feedback. However, she isn't always in a position to be able to use that kind of management approach. This can be frustrating to her.

I think that [her management style] changes (sighs) from time to time... we all know that changes based on the situation and the individual. I think I'm, and I don't know that I really like that about me, but I think I'm really more of a micromanager than I'm really comfortable being and I'd really like to be and I think that's because what I have to be right now, in order to succeed, to meet expectations.

But that's not my normal style, the style I like to use. My most comfortable, I guess mode of operation is one of collaboration, discussion, getting and receiving, getting and giving input into decisions. Giving the benefit of the doubt, giving people opportunities to make mistakes, to grow and I don't think we're in an environment right now where that is tolerable, for the most part...

Several years ago, in a previous position, Amy led a very large program change in the delivery of patient care. The change was successful and she attributes that to the importance she put on using her team members to accomplish the change.

It was a lot of work; most of it as far as taking up energy was working with staff to get them to understand what the changes were going to be and to get them to buy into it; staff and physicians. I certainly can't take all the credit and I wouldn't do that because there were other people who helped with that, a whole team.... But the feeling of success, I

think I'm only really understanding and valuing more as time goes on because the concept that was put into place almost ten years ago is still there.... So that to me is definitely a measure of success, a big one... And it was nice to have that opportunity to do that; it could have been a failure.

I'm quite proud of the staff because they could have just as easily decided they weren't going to do that. I think one of the things we did that was really important is that we did give them a lot of education... we took them off the unit... it was very well planned and organized. I think that definitely played a big role... and we really used the staff who wanted to move forward; we used them to help with their peers. And that made a big difference too. It wasn't just the leadership...

It is important to Amy that she be fair and objective in managing her employees. This was important to her when she was new to management, and it is still important to her today.

I remember ... feeling like I needed to prove that I could be objective and fair when I had worked side by side by them previously and I mean I think that's true even now as a manager; they want to know that that person is fair and objective. And isn't going to take sides and I remember feeling [as a new manager] like I had to work hard to make sure that they could see that at that time because I had worked as a staff member... It was just being able to show them that I could also lead the pack so to speak. And that they would feel comfortable with that.

Amy's Reflections on the Impact of Class Values on her Management Style

Amy believes that her working class background and values have affected her up to this day, impacting the way she approaches work situations and manages employees.

I still think those [values she grew up with such as integrity, being true to your word, following through, etc.] are important and I think how I'm disappointed when someone doesn't follow through. And people forget, I'm not talking about that. Just purposely not doing that, that kind of thing or does something that goes against their integrity.

I guess I can think of it a little bit more in terms of a staff nurse when you see some of the stuff that happens. And I think, 'how could you talk to someone like that.' Some of the responses we hear nurses give to patients or family members and I think 'if I was your family... how could you say that? Would you talk to your family member like that?' And I think that's not just only professionalism, but I think that comes back to values because ... that is their mode of communication. They think nothing of it... the sort of values or lack of values that they have versus those of us who didn't grow up in those kinds of environments and we have some regard for respect and honesty and that sort of thing.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

Amy's career in management hasn't always been a smooth one.

Initial Transition issues

Amy admits that her transition into a manager role from a staff nurse position wasn't always an easy one.

Having worked side by side with the staff and then going to the other side of the fence and also having been an active participant in the union, and now I was on the other side. So I think that was a transition I had to make... I remember struggling with a few personalities that I had worked with... one nurse on my unit... who had also been active in the union who really didn't agree with my changing roles and felt that I was somewhat of a traitor... I think I had to prove myself to her, I'm sure to others as well, but her particularly

because she was a strong personality. ...But as we worked together more and more in my new role, and I was able to continue to respect her for her own beliefs and activities and understood it, and she could see that I was still being fair and objective and I think that helped us to get through that....We worked well together and she was very supportive once we got through that transition time.

I made sure I showed her respect, and I did respect her for the skills and knowledge that she had... she'd been in nursing a lot longer than me... so I had things I could learn from her.... utilizing her skills as we got new people in... she did a good job with new staff and I included her... she could be recognized and she felt valuable.

Amy admits to having a little bit of an internal struggle when she moved from union president into a manager role.

I did a little bit; I thought what's that gonna look like just 'cause you were in the union, and now you're in management and I don't really know how I came to terms with that. I don't remember; I certainly got over it, but I knew it ran through my mind. I did struggle with that a bit, I remember thinking 'what's everybody gonna think?' You know, 'how are they gonna react to this?'

I think it was that I was more concerned with how that looked to everybody else; how could you be the president of the union and then all of a sudden or the next thing you do is you're the manager of the unit; how can you do that? That doesn't look good maybe; what would I think if someone did that? So I think that's where my concern was in the lack of comfort with the decision.

Amy's Outbursts of Temper

At times, Amy has had outburst of anger at others while in a manager role. She isn't proud of those times, and feels that they go against the way she was raised to treat others. One example she relayed had to do with a confrontation she had with a physician.

This particular physician was a bit eccentric and at that point in time I guess I'd say I tended to not speak up or confront... with issues and let things go until it got to the boiling point. And I think back on this, this is how my father functioned too. .. And then I left him have it.... I think that was because of my lack of experience and just being younger and maybe not really having had a good role model on how to deal with people like that. Not only in my family, but also in the workplace... I guess I really didn't know how to do some of that and that was my, that was what I knew, you let it go until you can't handle it anymore and then you let him have it and then you feel like an ass, you know (laughs)...

This physician is very... different kind of man. For a [physician] he was very, very quiet, to the point of almost not being engaged with the other person. His interpersonal skills were sorely missing (chuckles). There seemed to be an expectation almost a need to read his mind to understand what he wanted, what he was thinking, how he was making his decisions. There was no communication, no discussion, even with his patients. I mean there was lack of eye contact; he was looking at the floor.... working with him day after day after day and we had the same, we couldn't get words out of him, we couldn't read his writing; just the whole communication was terrible... I sat him down and was like 'I have had it with you. I'm tired of reading your mind; I'm tired of trying to read your writing; you won't talk; your patients wonder why you won't talk to them; you don't

make eye contact...' I mean, I unloaded all of this and after reflecting on it, it probably wasn't the best way to handle that. And he just sat there. So there wasn't any difference. He'd go 'uhh, huh.'... I think the only thing it did for me, I got it off my chest, and number two I could give him, since we had that conversations, he'd do his thing and I'd say 'okay, [name]' and he knew and then I'd get a little bit more out of him. But I just felt like, I think the way I came across was just way too strong. But my own feelings about that were, I felt like I just let that go way too long and I just like went out and slammed him with it. And that is how I always saw my father. Now at that time it didn't occur to me... it reminded me of my father who at least from my perspective it seemed like he let things build up and 'wammo bammo.'

Amy recalls another time she lost her temper, this time with a staff person who reported to her.

A [clerical support person on the nursing unit] who sort of just did her own thing. She typically didn't follow orders very well; she did things at her own speed...and on this particular day, it was extremely busy [in another part of the unit] and I had asked her to go back and help. And continued to see that she made no effort to go back and again this was building up as I knew she wasn't always compliant and I had to 'please won't you go back there'. So she obviously wasn't going to do what I asked her to do, so I asked her to come in to the office; I closed the door and said 'next time I ask you to do something, I expect you to do it. Don't ever, ever ignore what I say.' And I even remember banging my fist. And she's like this [look of surprise or fear] so I knew I was way, again I went way overboard and I said to her 'I don't ever want to have to do this to you again. The next time I ask you to do something; I want you to do it. And I want you to do it right away.'

Word spread throughout the unit that I did this; I even got a call from the [director over that area of patient care] who said ‘it’s about time that somebody put her in her place.’ I was okay but I took this way too far... I characterize it as I was just ugly. That’s just not me; I don’t like using that style. I often think ‘there’s a better way to do that.’ It just wasn’t something I feel good about afterwards... It’s just not my style to sort of lose control; that’s sort of how I felt, like I lost control.

Ambivalence about Moving up

Amy was surprised by her most recent promotion.

When I was the manager of [specialty unit], and knowing that someday I wanted to move up the ladder... I was promoted to the position that I’m in now, I was I guess I’d have to characterize it as I was kind of surprised, ‘cause it came about in a very strange way. I had no idea the position was open... it was really strange... so I ended up taking the position because I wanted to stay here and it was an opportunity to move up, so it would be stupid not to do it... And I remember moving into that office and thinking ‘now what do I do?’... I had no orientation; I didn’t feel like I belonged there.... It was just this very strange feeling; very different than what I would expect if I moved up the ladder.

Amy isn’t sure she wants to continue to move up.

So I think I would still like to continue to move up; I’m not totally sure about that but I sort of think that I would like to... Currently I don’t feel well prepared as I would like to feel. Some of that is probably just, well I don’t want to say self induced, but somewhat self induced and somewhat induced from [those in higher positions in the organization]. And I don’t know if I want that; I’m not totally sure I want that position either, you know a Vice President.... I’m ambivalent about it; I feel like I should, it’s something I should

strive for because I've said to myself I have maybe fifteen more years to work... that I say to myself 'can I really stay in a position like this that long?' I don't know if that's realistic. And I still have a lot to learn; that's the other piece. I do feel like I have more to learn. So I don't know.

The Importance of Family Traditions

Values and traditions from Amy's working class background are still important to her today, even though she could clearly afford to have a different life style; she chooses not to do that.

I did have a cleaning lady at one time. And that was nice and she was great and then she retired and then I went through about three more cleaning ladies and it just didn't work. And then I decided I'm not doing this anymore; I'm doing it myself.... my mother didn't have a cleaning lady.

One area of traditions and values from her background that is very important to Amy is her family's Christmas traditions.

The traditions that we still carry through at holidays, Christmas being one for example, although now Christmas is always at our house, we still carry through some of the same traditions that we did when we were at home. Church on Christmas Eve with a special meal after the service, open one gift on Christmas Eve which is always pajamas; we all laugh, we all know what we're getting because it's always pajamas on Christmas Eve. Christmas jammies, we call them. And then the homemade cinnamon rolls on Christmas morning, now I think, I hear people talking about having a brunch and I think that would be kind of nice to do that for a change, but then I'm like, no got to stick with the cinnamon rolls and coffee. And the only thing we changed is that we don't do turkey anymore, we do prime rib. But it's still a big dinner, so that's I guess one thing that is a

traditional type of thing. But in general, it's sort of like with the housekeeping, certain things that my mother did that I also do like making things that are homemade as opposed to not, cinnamon rolls being one of them. I love to do those... that's what I think I grew up with it and I learned how to do it and I still do and I always will.

Believe me the thought [to pay someone else to make these items] has crossed my mind at times... and I'm thinking I could just buy this stuff, but it just wouldn't be the same.

Amy's Reflections on Working Class Values Conflicts with Manager Role

Amy believes her background has impacted her today and at times she isn't happy with where that influence has led.

I still come back to that whole thing with the physician and that wasn't ... I wasn't brand new at that point in time but just how the best way to handle this and conflicts and one on ones... and that still from time to time is a struggle. What's the best way to approach someone about something, you know? Where often times my gut, I'm so fired up about it, I want to just go and lop their head off and then I think, more often than not, 'now wait a minute how's that going to look, you know.' I really have tried to think about my approach and if I were that person, maybe how I get the message best, which I know is different for everyone but I do try to think about it from both sides. And how will I come across.

Amy still feels a sense of ambivalence in her current role, especially when she has the opportunity to return to the world of the patient care specialty area that she had worked in as a staff nurse and managed for such a large part of her career.

When I, in my current role, when I am interacting with what I put the [acronym for specialty unit] world, at meetings, like we had today a physician meeting that I go to

every month or whether I go up to [the unit] and go through, 'hi , how are you?' to the staff and maybe visiting some patients, I again, get a whole different energy that I feel than when I'm at a more of a generic committee that is a broader and I again I think that goes back to [the specialty unit]'s been, I've spent more years in [that specialty] than anywhere else; it's where I know the most clinically... that's where my knowledge base is and I do get just totally a different feeling. It's just a whole different energy from when I'm interacting in that world than in the other world.

“I don’t like just standing by on the sidelines”

Olivia’s Story

Olivia is a director in an outpatient care area of a community health system in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the U.S. She started her career in health care in a clerical support position and has worked in administrative support areas for outpatient health care organizations. She has worked in coordinator, manager and director level positions for the community health system.

I don’t like just standing on the sidelines.... I wouldn’t feel comfortable telling people do this, do that when it comes to work that is perhaps above and beyond their job description without me myself being involved, and putting a hand in it... and being right there with them.

- Olivia

Growing Up Working Class

Olivia grew up in a small town in a rural section of a state in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. Her father worked in an accounting type position in a poultry plant; her mother owned and worked as a hairdresser in a shop adjacent to their home. Olivia has an older brother.

My father was an accountant at...poultry plant. My mother had a beauty shop in the house; so even when she worked full time it was adjacent to the house. She was home. She was one of those... she took her break every night from 4:30 to 6 and we all sat together for supper. Supper was at 5 o’clock. Never 5 minutes before and never 5 minutes after; at 5 o’clock.

The Value of Hard Work

Olivia attributes her own work ethic to her parents valuing work and being a good role model.

My parents have a very strong work ethic. I can probably count the number of times on my hand, on one hand that my father missed work due to being sick. And the same with

my mother. The longest time my mother was ever off work was when she had any surgeries.... My father would go to work with fevers; I don't know how he did it.... But he just didn't miss work, ever. And my mother was the same way; she would work in the beauty shop when she was sick.... they worked over time when they had to. I mean work was important... for them to be there, for my mom to be there for her customers and for my dad to be there for [the company he worked for], that was important.

When asked if Olivia thinks that had an influence on her, she replies

Absolutely because I hold those same standards to myself and I hold those same standards to those people that report to me. Everybody who works for me knows that I don't tolerate a lot of absenteeism, unless of course it's valid....

Her parents wanted Olivia and her brother to have a better life than they had. Olivia ties that with their strong work ethic.

That it's okay to want more; it's okay to strive for better. I mean my parents wanted better for my brother and I than for what they had. They wanted us to go on for higher education... they wanted more for us and expected more out of us. And I think that's all intertwined with their work ethic. I really do.

Olivia remembers her parents telling her fun things about their working environments.

We heard a lot of good things; my dad's a real people person. So he would come home with the fun stories. You know, just like my mom would tell me the gossip in the beauty shop, which I loved. And I used to sit in the beauty shop; and I knew all the customers. I mean a lot of them came to my wedding when I got married; a lot of them were like part of our family. And my mother still gets together for lunch with a lot of those ladies. I loved sitting over there listening to the gossip....

And they were, a lot of people lived right in town and I knew who they were. They'd bring their kids along to play with me and [her brother]. We'd eat pizza and watch TV on Friday nights while my mom finished up in the beauty shop. So it was fun, that was really fun and she didn't really complain about her work either. She hated cleaning the beauty shop... that is the one thing I remember her complaining about... she really enjoyed the people that came into her shop and had great stories. So I heard more about the really good things about their job and very little about the things that they didn't like....

Olivia thinks that this early portrayal of the world of work has had an impact on her today, on the way she approaches work.

I can tell you that I try to make the workplace fun; still keep it professional, but it's possible to have fun. I always think that you spend more time at work than you do with your family so it should be something you like doing and it ought to be the people that you really enjoy working with. And I do that with my husband, I also tell him about the funny things and the good things that happen too.

Learning the Importance of Family

One of the values that Olivia learned from her background is the importance of family.

My father would come home from work usually at 5 o'clock and that was our family time. My brother and I were very active in high school.... in sports, in church; my parents were very religious; community activities and organizations.... Eating together as a family is a good example of [the values important to her family]... Going to church together every Sunday morning... my father is extremely involved in the community, he still is. And that was always instilled in us to give back.... my mother... kept house; did the spring cleaning, the fall cleaning, washed out all the cupboards....

Her Family's Expectations of Good Behavior

Olivia recalls that her parents expected that she and her brother would be “good”; that they would obey the rules that her parents had set for them such as:

When the street lights came on, you better be home. That was our cue to be home at night.... We grew up having curfews; we were disciplined, sat in the corner, sat in chairs; every once in a while we got spankings (chuckles)....

The working class community where Olivia grew up was tight knit as well. There was an unspoken expectation that the children would behave and if they didn't the whole community would know.

Well we were the good kids, that's for sure. We hung out with other good kids; we weren't in the bad crowd. ... We didn't dare do anything wrong, because trust me, my parents would find out about it. Plus the community was so tight knit; literally when I was growing up I knew who lived in every house in [name of town]. If people saw us doing something bad, they gave us heck and also told our parents about it. It was like the whole community watched out for each other. But we were expected to behave and set an example...

She recounts a story that occurred during her teenage years to illustrate this expectation.

Yeah, we were the good kids. I can remember one of my girlfriends saying to me, it was on New Year's Eve and we went to some party where there was alcohol; we were like sixteen and I remember her saying to me, 'my mom and dad said I could go 'cause I'm with you and they said you're a good kid.' And I remember thinking oh my god (laughs). And she got drunk and I'm thinking 'I have to take her home.' But yeah, we were the

good kids. We went to church, we went to Sunday School, we were in the youth group, we volunteered... yes, we were the good kids.

The expectations set by her parents were strong. When Olivia did not meet her parents' expectations, there were consequences.

We got into trouble; when my dad was mad, you knew it. I can only remember my dad spanking me two or three times when I was younger. But when he was mad, we got the lecture from [her father's name]; he would go on and on and on. And he'd repeat himself and he would just go, he'd pace; oh it would go on and on and on. Yeah, my mom wouldn't talk to us and my dad would lecture us but yeah, we knew when they were mad. And when he got mad, he was mad for a long time (laughs)... the [name] lecture, yeah, I had many of them (laughs again).

Her parents also expected that she and her brother would do well in school.

We were expected to have good grades; and were disciplined if we didn't. We were pretty much told 'anything less than a B wouldn't be tolerated.' And if we were having trouble, we stayed after school... whatever we needed to do to get our grades up. It truly wasn't too much of an issue to be quite honest with you; we were expected to have good grades.... Well, it was expected that my brother and I would go on and get college degrees. We knew that when we finished high school that we would be going somewhere...

It was just like a no-brainer when we were in ninth grade and we had to decide if we were going into academic, non-academic or business; we were going into academic. That was just a no-brainer. You know, again with the grades; we got a C it was like hell froze over.

They just expected us to be involved; they expected us to be good at what we did and they expected that there would be education beyond high school.

Um, I was very rebellious.....

Rebellion Against Authority

Although Olivia articulates what the expectations were that her parents had for her, she also is very frank in describing her rebellion against those expectations. The first example she recounts has to do with rebelling against her father's expectations that she would play sports.

(Sighs), well my father expected my brother and I to play sports and to absolutely love them because he played sports and absolutely loved them. My brother really loves sports and was not that good. I was very good but I didn't like playing them. I'd sweat and I didn't like it (laughs). So he was very disappointed that I wasn't involved in more sports because that's what he wanted.

I remember when I refused to go out for the field hockey team my senior year. You would have thought it was the end of the world; absolutely the end of the world 'cause I was not going to play field hockey and that was the last sport that I was playing in. It didn't matter that I was in Student Council, I was in gymnastics, I was a cheerleader, I was in the band... it was sports. I wasn't on any sports teams anymore.

Olivia also rebelled against the expectation that she get a college degree following high school.

(Laughing) my brother was the good child, and I was, not bad but I was rebellious. I was the one that gave them the gray hairs.... I was supposed to... I was accepted into [large city in the Mid Atlantic] School of the Arts and didn't go which broke my parents' heart. My grandmother was an artist.... and I think they saw this as a big art future for me and probably should have turned out that way, but it didn't.... I fell in love; I guess if you

want to call it that, my senior year of high school and couldn't fathom leaving my boyfriend. So because I hadn't applied anywhere else to school because I was so set to go into the city to study art, I ended up going to [community college] and then transferred to [area state university} and they were delighted because that's an art type program and ended switching majors....(laughs again)...and then I told them I wasn't going back. So yeah, I popped a few gray hairs....

Olivia's Reflections on her Working Class Background

The values that Olivia learned growing up in a working class family impact her today.

The work ethic and you don't quit; you stay loyal to a place, no moving around. The few times that I did really had to do with circumstances in my personal life. And you know I feel that overall... I wouldn't feel right being one of those people that bounces around. I just... I feel very committed; that comes from my parents. You learned it by example, not necessarily that they talked about it. But that was the example that they set. And you grew up thinking that's the right way to do things. And I think it is, you know.

Olivia believes that the pictures her parents painted of their work experiences have impacted the way she views her own work experiences and career.

So I guess that overall I feel like I always wanted a job where I could be myself and have fun at it, too....And be successful... that came from them talking about their fun experiences they had where they worked. I couldn't imagine working at a place where you didn't like your coworkers and just didn't, didn't want to get up in the morning... I couldn't imagine that; I really couldn't.

Career and Manager Experiences

After leaving college, Olivia got married and within a year or two had a son. Her life took on an unexpected turn; she became an instant mom to three children and had to work at a variety of positions in order to make ends meet.

Well, I used to work at the ... bank in summers and over holidays when I was in college. So when I didn't go back to school, they hired me there. I stayed working there... when I got married; I also took on two daughters. I had two stepdaughters whose mother did not see them so I was mom, they called me mom. So I became an instant mother of two little girls and then two years into the marriage, I had my own son....right after I had [son's name], it took me awhile to get my health back. My husband got laid off and we had hardly any income coming in.... I ended up working three part time jobs.... working at a school district in the transportation office, mainly for the insurance.

One of those part time jobs was working in a health care office. This began Olivia's career path in health care. She was able to move from those part time positions to a full time position at another health care office and eventually moved up to an administrative support coordinator type of position with that health care provider office, ultimately taking a similar type of position in the community health system.

I got in at [name of health care organization]. There I worked in the front office and within a couple of months they moved me up to [another function] and became their [name of function] coordinator. ... I was going to go back and start pursuing my bachelor's degree, at which time I was recruited here [current employer]. So then I came here and was hired as a Coordinator and year and a half later moved up.....

Transition from Administrative Support to Management

When Olivia first came to the community health system she helped train the staff in the support functions for which she was hired. She wasn't immediately in a manager position. However within a couple of years she moved up to a support coordinator position and that was her first experience in a managerial role.

I was ready for it; ... I was very happy where I was at ... I really enjoyed the work and the people I worked for, but I was ready for something more. I wanted more responsibility. I wanted to be a manager or supervisor. ...I really did...I don't think I felt as challenged as I did when I actually moved into the Coordinator role...that's when I really felt challenged. And I like that; I get bored very easily so I like those challenges... I finally felt that restlessness, to keep moving around and keep looking for something else, I finally felt fulfilled. I finally felt like I was in an area where I had to work hard and was challenged and was happy at and was pretty good at.

One of the aspects of this transition into a manager role that Olivia really liked was building relationships and gaining recognition and respect for her work.

Well, some of the things that I did get the [functions] set up operationally were shared amongst senior management here at the hospital, which made me feel really good. I actually was asked to be a speaker at a national conference ... on some of the things we were doing with the computer system, that made me feel good. I also developed a little really nice report for the physicians with whom I worked and the... staff; just getting to know all those people; I really enjoyed that. And enjoy still seeing them to this day. You know, and talking to them; I felt like I built some really good lasting relationships. And also just gaining a lot of respect and for me that was fulfilling....nobody here at the

hospital... was ever doing what [we] were doing at that time... I enjoyed having that clean open slate that said this is the end result – you do what you want to do to get there....

Olivia's Management Style: Respecting her Staff

Growing up in a working class household and working class community has impacted the way that Olivia interacts with her staff. The value of hard work and the significance of work that were modeled in Olivia's working class home continue to be of importance to her today as a professional and as a manager.

My idea and things that I think of when somebody has a strong work ethic is somebody that arrives to work on time, you stay late or you take work home if you have a deadline that you have to meet; you are willing to help out in other areas when you are asked, or even when you're not asked when you see that there's a need. Those to me are things that define a strong work ethic. And for me personally, one of the examples that I can give you is... when we move a [function] from one location to another, I just don't leave that in the hands of ... the staff; I help schedule, I help coordinate, I put on my jeans and my tee shirt and I go to those [areas] whether it's for the day, three days, five days and I help actually move things and pack things, put things away... I'm right in there with them because I feel that that's something that I need to do. I don't like just standing on the sidelines. And that to me is an example of being willing to go above and beyond. I wouldn't feel comfortable telling people do this, do that when it comes to work that is perhaps above and beyond their job description without me myself being involved and putting a hand in it. And being right there with them.

She relays another example of how jumping in alongside the staff and helping them when it is needed is just something she needs to do.

Another example I can think of is at one of the [areas] ... and people called off sick and we were short staffed. I went in scrubs and sat at the front desk and helped register... took patients [where they needed to go], things that I hadn't done for a long time because they needed help.... I think that's a value and I think people respect and value you for it. I wouldn't feel good about myself if I didn't help to do those things.... I don't put myself on that high of a bar that I would not do things like that for people; absolutely not.

Olivia realizes that not all managers will get in there with the staff; however she believes it builds respect.

I'm there helping out. I can answer the phone... so I helped out, I faxed, I answered phone calls. I mean a lot of those things are things I did years ago. And I can remember one doctor in particular... came up to me a couple of days later... and told me how impressed he was that I would come in and do that.... So people are surprised when you're willing to do things like that; they just don't expect that from a manager.

I think it shows them that I have a good work ethic; I think it shows them that I really care; that I'm dedicated; that I want things to work well... I'm not doing it to put a gold star on my paper. I'm doing it because I know what it's like... I don't want to be one of those managers that's that hands off. That people don't think they can come to me say 'I really need your help' I'll do it if I can.

Another value that has impacted Olivia is the aspect of the community watching out for each other and the caring and giving nature of her parents. These have affected her approach to her staff, especially when bad things happen in their lives.

I think that has helped me as a manager, too. That there are people... go through different things in their lives. You know, you always think you have a terrible situation and

somebody else is going through something just as bad or worse. ... People come to me and think that I want to know all their problems. I don't; but when they do and I'm flexible with them and understanding because of that, that means so much to these people. And it isn't like that every day with some people, some of the people I have worked with or that report to me have gone through really terrible things, have gone through difficult times.

Olivia realizes that not all situations are easily resolved by using the same methods. It is important to her that she is flexible and understanding with her staff when they face difficult situations. This value comes from "I think just growing up being told to be... kind to people; my parents were very kind people," she says.

Not everything is black and white and different things happen at different times of your life that are out of your control... people have to be given some slack sometimes. I've had people work for me that are alcoholics; I've had people work for me that are in abusive relationships;... I had a person whose husband committed suicide... and it's not for me to know and it's not for them to share with me, but if they want to share with me when I talk to them and I say your performance hasn't been... what's going on? ... if it starts affecting their work after a while and you have to hold them accountable for that , but I also think you can give people a break sometimes too... and I think people knowing that you understand where they're coming from, what they're going through and trying to assist them... to help them do whatever they need to do to get through it; people don't forget that. ...

She realizes that not all managers show respect for their staff in the way that she does. She says, “I think I’m just very understanding; and you know, not everybody is like that... I think that makes a huge difference... that just builds a respect... it’s just on a different level.”

Olivia is quick to point out that her father’s approach to his job and the expectations that work was important have had a big impact on the way that she manages her staff.

Well I think I’m always able to keep a sense of humor about things. I mean even when something awful happens; I usually can find something to laugh about. And that definitely comes from my dad. My dad has a great sense of humor; my grandmother... had a great sense of humor. You can cuss somebody out and then sit and laugh; I mean I think that just relieves a lot of anxiety and stress.

She uses this approach with the staff that report to her. Olivia offers the following example.

I have this little thing called a swear box with all sorts of swear words in it. And when they come in really angry, after they are done venting, I shake it up and give it to them and they can say whatever swear words are in the box out loud. And we really just laugh... just as, you know, like a release. I know that helps me and I think it helps them in situations like that too. And it doesn’t mean that we’re not taking a situation seriously; it just means we just have to sit back and calm down a little bit. But I think that the ability to see, not humor in everything, but just try to keep things as light as possible when things really get tense, helps.

Olivia’s Reflections on her Class Impacts her Management Style

Olivia realizes that her working class background affects the expectations she has of herself and her staff. However, she also realizes that her experiences have influenced the way she manages her staff today as well.

I think I am definitely more flexible because I have so many people working for me that are single mothers. I was a single mother for a while; there are a lot of things that I understand and probably am more flexible with than my parents would be...but I expect people to give a hundred percent when they're here. And you know, for the most part, I get that.

She has been in similar situations as her staff, and she understands what it is like for them. This has helped her to be flexible and has affected the way she treats her staff.

Going through my divorce, coming in covering up black and blue marks; I know what that's like to see your husband stumble in at four or five in the morning and you're at home with three little kids. You know, I know what that's like and not everybody understands that; and not everybody cares. You know, I've had somebody come in and ... they're drunk (silence) and you just tell them that you know and you point them in the right direction and hope that they get help.... I know what it's like not to get a child support check and you have thirty dollars left in your checking account and you need gas to go back and forth to work and your son needs lunch money and you don't know what to do and I've worked three jobs to get through it all... I know what it's like to work your way out of that...and I know how hard that is....

I even remember [her boss] made a comment... an employee who was being abused ... and he said 'I just can't imagine why women stay; what's wrong with them?' And I said to him, 'I was abused and I was married to my first husband for ten years and you don't know what it's like; and you don't know what it's like to leave.' (Silence), the verbal and the emotional abuse can wear anybody down and I consider myself to be pretty strong

and it wore me down. So you don't know and watch what you say because you don't know who you're saying it to and you don't know what they've been through.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

There have been instances when Olivia's class values have conflicted with some of the expectations of others and episodes of conflict have occurred.

Conflicts with People in Positions of Power

Olivia recalls one time when she was called at home by a physician who was upset about something that had happened. Instead of being treated with the respect that is such an important value to her, he used that opportunity to attack her.

Getting called on a Sunday afternoon by a doctor to ream me out; basically complained about everything and took that opportunity to attack me personally...He was going through some marital issues...And he was very angry....he had apparently called [Administration] on Friday and hadn't gotten a return phone call...and went on and on... I felt he just wanted to talk about the operations [in his particular area] ... sucked and that was all my fault as I was the [specialty unit] manager and then he became very resentful and attacking... and telling me what a lousy job I did... and this and that.... I was on the phone with him over an hour... it didn't matter what I said... just yeah and that was probably the worst experience that I had.

When asked how she reacted to that situation, Olivia replies:

I listened and (sighs), it did (sighs) upset me... and I knew he and I get along really well, I knew it was obvious to him what a great job I was doing, so I knew his attacking me wasn't personal; he just needed to vent. And I was the person he got on the phone... I just got the feeling he wanted to talk and he was angry that nobody at the hospital was paying

attention to him... I considered the source and eventually could laugh about it. It was difficult... and to know that came from a professional, educated person who did that to me and never had the professionalism to come back and say 'you know, I'm really sorry, I shouldn't have done that.' He never said a word about it...

Olivia also tells of an ongoing conflict she had with a manager who is at a higher level in the organization than she is.

There is a particular [title] who from the time he started ... does not make eye contact with me at all, will go through other people to relay messages to me, who watches everything I do with a (sighs)... I don't even know how to describe it. He's very in tune to what I'm doing and if I do anything that he doesn't approve of, would go to my [boss] to complain. I was at a [local business event] ... where the person I had with me as a guest, saw him, saw that he saw me and he immediately left the room and went over to another [manager] and when I walked in the room, as soon as he saw me, turned his head, came over... and said hello to everyone around me, but me, totally, totally ignores me....It pisses me off. Because if he has a problem with my, with me doing a good job, then that's his problem, But I don't want him to get in my way of advancement or any other projects I could work on because of his personal feelings. I'm almost afraid to say anything because I just, it doesn't seem to matter what I do, he always seems to find something wrong with it... I try not to let it stop me. But that probably aggravates him more. And I think I kind of like that (laughs).

In this kind of situation, she feels as if at times she is second guessing herself or constantly trying to prove herself. She recalls a particular incident which she calls 'exhausting.'

There was a time when I first took over [a particular area of the operation]... and the [processes she was responsible for] were scrutinized every month... and at one point in time, I was accused of working [a particular process] in such a way that it would make.... look better than they really were. It was almost as if (pauses) I was accused of doing something underhanded so that would make [the results of the process] look better than [in the past when that part of the operation reported to somebody else]. And I remember I was really upset. And probably went above and beyond to show that that was not what I was actually doing, to explain myself to many people, many times. Until finally, that was put to rest... it was exhausting, you know, me trying to prove myself. And I, I (pause) started reading through all my little books here and ... I guess I was second guessing myself. I just felt that I need to prove that there's backup as to why I'm setting it up the way I'm setting it up....

Olivia recalls a situation where a previous boss did not communicate to his boss a project that she was working on. When the project finally came to fruition, Olivia was called on the carpet by a member of the administration.

I had talked to [superior's name] about exploring some different avenues... and this whole time [superior's name] knew exactly what was going on. I don't know if it wasn't shared with [member of administration]; I don't think all of it was but I sent out an email one day very happy that said I had come to an agreement.... and about half an hour after I sent this email I got this scathing email from [member of administration] saying that's not the way we do things around her and he is not pleased.... I was shocked... I had no idea I was doing anything wrong... and it turns out we did everything I had worked on anyway... I guess I just thought that everything was being passed on... and I got caught in the middle

and took the blame for it which did not surprise me because it wasn't the first time it had happened... and I supposed that the person that I reported to that knew what I was doing... I felt terrible about that. ... I didn't respect him [former superior] at all; by the time he left... I lost all respect for him. I wouldn't do that; I would take the blame and say that was on me. I knew she was doing this; yeah I was hung out to dry.....

Olivia relates this incident, and the statement that she wouldn't do that to someone, to the values she learned growing up in her working class home.

If you made a mistake, you own up to it; if you didn't do it right, say you didn't do it right... the same with accountability. Absolutely...I'm sure there's times when I don't do everything that I said I was going to do ... but I would never hang somebody out to dry like that; no way.

Not Including Employees in Decision Making

One aspect of management occurring sometimes that bothers Olivia is when decisions are made that have an impact on the people who have to do the work, but they are not included in the decision making.

Sometimes I think decisions are made and they don't include the people who have to do the work, who really know... I appreciate that when people realize this is a person who oversees that... they're going to know the answers.... the detail and the background and all the information you have to gather if you're going to make a change or you're going to implement a new service... I also take notice that if you do a lot of good things, they hone in on the things that still need work... And you know, I'm just thinking, I know but look at all the really great stuff. It just seems like they just want more and more and more

and more, which is okay, you know. But it's also nice to hear, so I remind myself of the good things.

Olivia finds that this affects the way she manages her staff as well.

I keep that in mind with my [staff], and try to remind them of the good things.... So I try to make sure they hear about the good things a lot. But I also find myself wanting more and more and more if I see that they can do a good job and make a difference and just don't settle for that if something else should get changed.... Now I expect those same things.

Internal Conflicts when Dealing with Employees

Olivia recalls a few occasions when her responsibilities as a manager conflicted with the values that she has in how people are treated.

Whenever you have to let somebody go, and they cry; that makes me feel bad. I take on a totally different persona when I have to discharge somebody. I keep it short; I keep a stone face. I don't let their emotions get to me; but when they leave, it's like (sighs)... you know?

She recalls one particularly difficult situation.

It was a time when somebody was hired. She did a really nice job and it turned up that she had [committed a misdemeanor] several years ago and I don't think she had indicated it on her application and we had to let her go. I felt really bad about that because the [incident in question] wasn't recent... if she had just been honest on her application...I felt really bad about that and I remember when we had to go to her unemployment hearing and I was asked to go and speak, my whole heart wasn't in it because I felt really bad and that we had to let her go. And I was happy that she got unemployment.

Olivia recalls another time when she had to deliver news that operations were going to be downsized and employees were going to be laid off.

... Having to meet with all the [affected supervisory staff in the areas targeted for downsizing] and letting them know we were [cutting operations in their areas]. I thought of them as my friends; they thought of me as their friend – you know keeping the professionalism in there... two of them to this day will not talk to me because of that. ... I think that's really poor on their part and yet I leave them alone when I see them because they feel the way they feel and I'm not going to change that. After... years if they still feel that way, that's the way they feel. And again, it was a bad situation and I felt sorry, but they had to take it out on somebody, so I took the brunt of that. And I don't think it's right and I don't think it's professional, but that's the way ... and there's nothing I can do to change that.... I feel bad for them but I also feel a little angry that they behaved that way... and I hope someday they realize I was the middle person here. And we did what we needed to do for the good of the [health system]....

In another example, Olivia recalls an uncomfortable situation when one of her subordinates was a friend of hers and how that complicated circumstances.

[Employee name] had a really hard time with my being her friend but in the office being her boss. She had a really hard time with that. And there was a point in time where... I felt the need to separate myself from her during the work day and she had a very hard time with that... it needed to be done. She said to me that she felt that people can be friends and still work together as boss and... and I think they can too, but I think you have to be... careful. And there were some things that I needed to address with her and as friends I mean, I needed to separate myself a little bit so I could be more objective....

Conflicts with Expectations of a Manager

There have been times when Olivia has had some internal or external conflicts resulting from the expectations put upon her as a manager.

Feelings of impostership

When new to management, there were times when Olivia didn't feel comfortable with the expectations put upon her by her superiors.

People thought that just because you were a manager, that you knew how to do everything. I can remember the first time I had to do budgets... well I never did a budget in my life and at that time they didn't have the training like they do now. They just gave you the papers and a list of instructions and I can remember sitting down and trying to do them... when I gave them to her {boss at the time}, her sitting at her desk going 'Hmmp, oh my god' and complaining because I guess they were just horrific... and I felt terrible, but I didn't know what I was doing... and she just, she didn't say, do you need help with these, she just assumed that I knew....

Olivia relates another experience where she was thrown into a situation and she felt as if she didn't really know what she was doing.

I can remember one (laughs) time when we were having a meeting and it was I and [several members of the senior leadership]... [boss's name] had done the whole proposal and she couldn't make the meeting and asked me to go; well I felt like an idiot. I didn't know what I was doing... and I really felt inferior, I really did... I handed these papers out and they all read over them and said 'well this looks good' and I thought well thank god because I don't know what the hell I'm talking about (laughs)... you know she just sent me and she just expected that I would be okay and I was petrified... and I thought oh my

god, I don't know what I'm doing. You know, and I'm reading over it and I'm trying to figure out her notes and her math and I'm thinking oh my god, I hope they don't ask me any questions. And they didn't... so it was just like I was thrown in and people took for granted ... you have to be eased into those things.

Time at work versus family

Early in her management career, the expectations put on Olivia in terms of time spent at work became overwhelming to her. Her family life suffered as a result. She has vowed that she will not try to fit those expectations again.

I'm not obsessed about being here until 8 or 9 o'clock every night and working weekends; I was like that when I started here.... I couldn't do it anymore and I was unhappy. I'd be here until 7:30 at night; I'd be here Friday nights 'til 8 o'clock. I'd come in on Saturdays and Sundays to work. Security used to always give me heck because I'd never call ahead of time (laughs).

And it came to a point where I realized I think I was put in a role that was ... it was nuts what we were given to do... I mean we just worked ourselves to the bone at that time... That was hard and I think because it was the first time I was ever in a role like that I really, really gave it a hundred and fifty percent to the point where I was exhausted. And I look back at that now and I think I don't ever want to work that way again.

The expectations that she had of the job she wanted to do came not only from those in power in the organization, but also came from Olivia, internally.

I think that's just me to be able to do a fantastic job for everything and everyone, every time. And I think after working that way for awhile, realized that was impossible so you

do the best you can, as much as you can. And it may not be enough for some people all the time... I won't do that again; I will never do that again....I just did what I had to do.

The stress affected her and her family; leading her to vow that she won't go down that road again in her career.

I don't want to work 65, 70 hours per week. When I look back on those... years that was just nuts.... I'm happier that I'm not working seventy hours a week; I have time for me.

And to be something other than my job. ... I don't want to be the person that's here at 7o'clock in the morning and here until 8 o'clock at night and be here on the weekends....

I don't need to be that person anymore. I think a lot of that was it was a new role for me, there were a lot of high expectations for me... and I just wasn't going to let anybody

down.... It [her family life] was pretty bad. Probably at that time I was contemplating a

divorce, my son was getting involved in drug; I had a big falling out with my brother over my son... I don't need sixty, seventy hour work weeks... never, never [again].

Expected behaviors

Over the years that Olivia has been a manager, she has had a few occasions when her behavior has been chastened because she wasn't acting in the way that was expected of someone in a manager role. One area in particular was when the values of being honest and upfront that Olivia learned in her working class family were at odds with what was expected of her as a manager in the organization.

Saying things inappropriately, at inappropriate times... being too honest. Sometimes I would divulge too much not knowing that what I was doing was wrong or that I shouldn't have said that. Um, that whole corporate thing (laughs).... learning about things that are being discussed or being looked at and changes that might be made... and you can't say

anything and that can really be hard. That was really hard for me and having to watch what you say and sometimes I'd say something and then think 'oh my god, I shouldn't have said that.' Or you know, people talking to you about their budgets for next year and you're thinking 'you're not going to be here in three months.' You know, just learning how to handle that. And not feel guilty about it... so there were times when I was very naïve and I would try to be very honest with people and would probably say too much. And had to learn what I could or couldn't say... one time [boss's name] kicked me under the table... and I stopped (laughs hard)... I think I did jump and I mean, I was trying to tell ... the truth and I was trying to use this manager stuff and I got kicked under the table, very hard. And that's when I learned that sometimes you just don't say anything at all. I probably still have a little bit of trouble with that.

Olivia's Reflections on her Struggles between Class Values and Manager Role

Olivia acknowledges that there have been times when others in the manager roles in the organization have made comments to her about her management style, particularly as it relates to how she sees herself working side by side with her employees or how she treats them.

I'd be lying if I said that over the years, people haven't made comments about 'well I can't believe you were helping move boxes and I can't believe you did this and you did that.' And it would be from people, other managers or directors that would never ever think of doing those things. And for the most part it's been people who grew up in upper classes; it's beneath them. Beneath them, even so much as being nice and kind to their peers....they don't have the same frame of reference that I think you have to have to keep those things in mind. Especially when you're working in a corporation like this when you have people at all different levels.... I mean I know [other managers at her level in the

organization] that I walk down the hall with and think I'm crazy because I say hi and stop and talk with the cleaning people. And I will tell you that the cleaning people know my name and maintenance people; I will stop and talk to them because I like them. And I can tell you that there are people that say 'I can't believe you stopped and talked to them' or 'who is that?' Just those types of comments; like it's so beneath them I just think that's terrible. I just think you can be kind to everybody and it doesn't make you less important.

Olivia takes her job seriously and working hard is a strong value, learned from her working class parents. However, she doesn't define herself by her job. Other aspects of her life are more important to her.

There's more to me than what I do here at this job... and I think that's more interesting than what I do to get a paycheck. To me personally it is... I want people to know what I'm about and like me for that not because of what I do or what I am.... I think people who talk about their work and almost define themselves by what they do in their job, I think that's boring and not very deep.... I can't imagine if your whole world revolved around your job and if that defined you; what would ever happen if you were with a company that went under or you were fired... I mean I would be devastated if that happened to me, but I just think if that's all you had to relate to... that would be very shallow.... When I'm not here, I'm different.

“You better walk the chalk line”

Wendy’s Story

Wendy is a director of an outpatient affiliate of a community health system in a state in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the U.S. She began her career as a registered nurse on a medical surgical unit of a regional hospital and rose to the position of Director of Nursing. She left that position and began working for her current employer, holding several positions since that time. She was promoted to the Director of this outpatient affiliate over ten years ago.

My sister and I still say that, we had to walk the chalk line... Kind of like a chalk line like a carpenter would use. You stay right on the line. That’s why I am the way I am... that was his way of saying you’d better behave; and no bad behavior would be tolerated.

- Wendy

Growing Up Working Class

Wendy grew up the oldest of three girls in a small town in the central part of a state in the Mid-Atlantic portion of the U.S. Her father worked in a manufacturing plant; her mother was a stay at home mom. She calls her childhood “charmed.”

My mother was a stay at home mom; and my father was in manufacturing. I have two sisters, younger sisters. My sister next to me is Down’s syndrome, she is also totally deaf. My youngest sister is okay, normal.... My first years were here in [location], in a home that my grandfather owned and then because of my father’s employment we moved.... And we lived there the remainder of my growing up years ‘til I got married. I’ve lived what I would call a charmed life; I have two parents who were married to each other and stayed married to each other. I have two sisters who were always; we were very close in age so we ended up being very close. I went to grade school, high school and then I was fortunate enough to be able to go to nursing school....

Being Expected to Work Hard

Wendy remembers that the values that she learned growing up were that you were expected to work hard and be dependable.

If you had a job, you were there; you didn't call in sick unless you were truly sick. You did a good job when you were there; you didn't goof off – you were expected to work. And you gave it all you had. And my father and mother were of the mindset that when you got a job, you kept the job, you didn't jump around a lot... you had a job, you went to the job and you were there. 'I don't feel like going to work today so you call in sick;' that wasn't acceptable. You had to be you know, in the bathroom puking, that kind of thing... and you did a good job, you were dependable. And you could expect a good wage and a good life if you did that.

And in Wendy's household it wasn't acceptable just to work hard and be dependable. It was expected that whatever you were doing, you would do a good job at it.

It was expected that when you did things, you did them correctly; that was my family. My dad, my mom, you weren't doing things half; you do them the right way. When my mom did things around the house it wasn't like you vacuumed part way; you vacuumed under, in and around everything. It wasn't through the middle. And I think that's where you learn that, I really do.

When you did things to help my dad, you did it the way it was supposed to be done, not if you didn't feel like doing it all, you didn't get away with just doing half. Yeah you can't do it; you had to do the whole thing.

If I was helping him do something, his famous line was ‘you do that just like a girl.’ I would get so thumping mad... ‘Cause I was a girl. What did he expect? Did he expect me to do it as he would have done it being a man; and that’s what he expected of me.

Encouraged to Get an Education

Wendy’s parents encouraged her to do well in school and to go on to school after high school, even if the encouragement and established expectations were unspoken.

I know there were expectations that when I went to school, that my grades would be good. I remember when I was talking about going to school... they were very supportive of the fact that I would be doing this because this was something that they felt was a good reflection on them... I think this was something that my parents were very supportive of, that they wanted me to get this education and go on to school.

My parents I think were very proud of the fact that I went to school to be a nurse; I think somewhere deep in my mother if she would have had a choice of what she had to do that’s what she would have done. Not that she ever regretted not having a career, but I think that’s a field that she would have, that would have appealed to her.... So yeah, I think they were really supportive of that; really wanted me to head in that direction; that it would be a good way for me to go; that it would be a successful way for me to go....

Learning to Obey the Rules

Wendy grew up learning that it is important to obey the rules. This is a value and an expectation that is still important to her today.

It is important, because that’s why the rules are there. Because when I have rules that I have, that I expect people who report to me to follow, I expect them to follow the rules. I don’t like when people don’t follow the rules because I have more work to do then, so

yeah I think that's important. That's what my parents modeled to me; if this is the rule, this is what we do. We don't break it; we don't try to go around it; the rules are there for a reason and we need to respect them.

The influence of her father helped Wendy to internalize the importance of obeying the rules.

His other famous line was to walk the chalk line. That meant you walked on the line, you didn't deviate, you just (makes straight line with her hands)... my sister and I still say that, we had to walk the chalk line. He would tell us if we were going somewhere and he expected good behavior, or especially if he was not in the best frame of mind, 'when we get in here, you had better walk the chalk line.' Kind of a chalk line like a carpenter would use; you stay right on the line. That's why I am the way I am; and he was very serious then; that was his way of saying, you'd better behave. And no bad behavior would be tolerated.

I think that was his influence that that was the way he expected us to behave... my father was a strict disciplinarian; he was a lot of fun. We did a lot of good, fun things, but he was a disciplinarian. More so than my mother; you could get around her but you couldn't get around my dad. No way.... You live it so it just gets ingrained in you without any deliberate action of yours; it is just there.

The Importance of Family

Wendy learned the importance of family and of taking care of one another from her family.

I think a lot of my family has tremendously impacted me, positively most of the time. I was very close to my grandparents too... my mother's mother was gone by the time my father met my mother; my grandfather died when I was quite young, but my fathers parents – I was very close to them... They were people who didn't have much in life,

worked hard and did with very little. And we just learned to get by; but you cared a lot about each other.

Learning that You Treat People Fairly

It is important to Wendy that she treats people fairly. She says that she learned this at home also.

Coming from a household that had a handicapped person; I think it was very important to my parents that we all got treated as much the same as we could. We were all expected to have same behavior; we were expected to do our chores... the expectations were the same for all of us, but the rewards were the same as well. ... So I think I grew up expecting that same treatment of everybody, whether you're more important, have a higher rank or lower rank or you have a different ethnic... I think my parents were that way too. They tried to treat everyone they knew... where you came from or what you did or high up you were really wasn't important to them. The importance was what kind of person you were or how much they enjoyed your company. It was nothing for my father or my mother, and they entertained a lot of people from the church, but they always entertained the minister or any other poor soul that came in the door or any other parishioners or anybody that really needed a meal, my mother was quick to fix one for them.

So it really wasn't the differentiation between anybody's class or their anything like that... so I think I learned that as well. I also like to be treated fairly or the same as other people when it comes to myself. So if I want my superior to treat me the same as he does all his other employees, I have to treat all the employees the same that work for me. I have the same expectation of myself.... So there are those two things. I would expect to treat everybody the same regardless, 'cause that's what I was taught. Nobody is more

important or less important, they just have different jobs. And we have different roles to play, but without any one of us, we're all, the whole thing could fall apart. But I think that came from my background too....

Wendy's Reflections on Growing up Working Class

Wendy believes that her background and growing up working class have impacted her today. In particular her work ethic and the expectation that she do a good job are values that she carries with her....

My work ethic; you know I don't call in sick. I have to be pretty much half dead before I call in sick and then I don't feel like I should be home. And I think the fact that I need to do well at work; I need to do a good job. There are certain things that are expected and I need to live up to.

When asked where those expectations come from, Wendy replies, "Um, maybe from my supervisor or maybe the facility in general; some of it comes from me.... if there's a certain expectation in this job I would expect that I would be able to perform that."

However, Wendy believes that her working class background as well as having a sister who is handicapped have all influenced her and continue to impact her today.

I think they've all made me what I am today; I think it's the positive and the negative...my father was definitely the leader of the home. I always thought I had to be the leader, we were very close. My middle sister was handicapped so my mother's attention was with her and my younger sister. So I tended to spend more time with my father because I had to because he had to help somehow and I was with him, he was more my caretaker. So I think I got the more, the leadership role, more so than my sisters did. I think it was thrust upon me and I just did it.

And my father was the leader at home too; he was the dominant person so I think having been with him and having spent more time with him I picked up those characteristics as opposed to my sister who is more like my mother who is the less dominant of the two. I think my growing up years...having a sister with a handicap taught me a lot of things. I think it taught me to accept people no matter what they are; I think it taught me to not be embarrassed when we're out in public because people look and my mom said 'people are gonna look, that's just the way it is.' You know, what do you do when you see somebody odd, you look. So I learned to not get too worried about that. You are who you are and if people don't like you, tough beans. Because... the people who matter know who you are... So I think I learned that. I think, um, well I think just people in general, I learned to accept people. Because of being close together we had to learn to share, we had to learn to get along, to do the things we needed to do. So I think my whole experience as a child was a good one, and a close family – and family is very important to me. And caring about others is important. And I think that makes me who I am.

Career and Manager Experience

Wendy knew she wanted to be a nurse, even as a child.

I think I was the caretaker... I always wanted to be a nurse; I had a "Nancy Nurse" book (laughs) when I was a kid; it had band aides in it... I still have the book; it's all beat up... and that is what I always thought about doing. It's kind of what I always wanted to do; it was never a question that I wanted to be a nurse of some sort. ... It wasn't like somebody made me do that; it was just what I wanted to do... It's weird, it's weird. ... I thought about being a beautician once and my father said 'what do you want to be that for?' and I thought 'okay that isn't going to work, so I'll be a nurse.'

Wendy went to nursing school and then got married and moved to another small city in the same Mid-Atlantic state. She started working as a medical surgical nurse at a small, local hospital and slowly worked her way into supervisory and management positions. Eventually, she became Director of Nursing at that small hospital.

I had that job [Director of Nursing] for probably two years and then I decided I needed to go back to school... a degree in health care administration which really gave me a lot of credit for your experience as a nurse. And I felt I was in the administrative field at that point, so the classes would be more beneficial for what I was doing... And it truly was beneficial for the line of work that I was in. Then there was a lot of changes with the management of [that] hospital... I left that Director of Nursing position....

Wendy moved into a nursing position at a community health system, held various positions and eventually was asked to take the director position in the current outpatient area within the health system.

Then I was approached to see if I was interested in a night shift supervisor job at [community health system]... which I accepted. So I was a part time night shift supervisor.... The position at the [outpatient area] opened up and applied for that and I've been there ever since... I kind of moved through a lot of different jobs; as a supervisor I felt as if I had my fingers in a lot of different areas in nursing which I found interesting. I got experience in maternity; I got experience in oncology. I got a little bit in the ER, some in the intensive care unit, med surg of course. So I was involved in a lot of different areas of the hospital which of course made me more versatile in all the things that I did. And my college education has definitely paid off... a lot of economics and accounting which helped me; I was very weak in that ... and people management, ethics; the kinds of

things I needed to learn, so my education... certainly prepared me for what I do now.

And ... Director of Nursing, had I had the education, I would have been much better at it.

There was a lot of turmoil at that point within the hospital.... And I learned a lot. But it was not exactly a good time in my life... that's pretty much how I got to be here...

Wendy's Rough Transition to a Management Position

Wendy's early management roles as an assistant nurse manager and then supervisor did not require a great deal of management duties. However, when she became Director of Nursing, there were some aspects of that job that were quite difficult for her.

(Sighs), well the very early years when I was assistant head nurse and supervisor it was more like just a title. I didn't really have a lot of management to do. When I was Director of Nursing, it got pretty hairy because at that point I worked for a ... company and they were very in tune to the bottom line. And they had some practices that in fact, that's why I left the job; they had some practices that I couldn't agree with. You had to base your staffing on, it was retrospective, in other words you reviewed it retrospectively. And in areas where you had more control over the census, in other words like the ER or maternity. If I had a night where, a night shift where there were no maternity patients, I shouldn't have a nurse there. However if I projected it, I had to have a nurse there because somebody might have come in the door.

And at 2 in the morning, having worked a lot of night shift, you just can't call people to come to work at 2 in the morning... so that was very difficult, and I did try to please. I worked very difficult, very long and stressed over trying to make them happy as to what needed to be done until the expectation got to where I thought it was ridiculous and I could not live with myself.

You would be giving people time off and you'd be calling them on their way off 'could you come in.' I spent a lot of time doing that kind of micro-managing. People were of course, not happy. We did go through a period of layoff which was very difficult so I went through, um, some very difficult things. I felt now that I look back on, I probably did them without a lot of very supporting tools to do them.

Wendy had to learn that she can't be the friends of people she supervises.

I learned a lot about people; a lot about how to handle people, what I should and shouldn't do. And I also learned that I don't need to be friends of the people that I work with. I always tried to do that; I always tried to be not socially interacting a lot with the people that I worked with... To a point, but not where I was their best friend because I find that is sometimes very difficult... you had to be careful you weren't appealing to one; so there were a couple of times when I probably stumbled and had to correct that behavior but I learned... I think it was a very humbling experience sometimes. And I used to get real worked up over their behaviors and things; what are they doing now, can I fix this? And I finally learned it wasn't my behavior that was bad; it was their behavior. I can try to help them correct that; but some of it they need to be responsible for. Once I could work through that myself, I took a lot less stress home.

Wendy acknowledges that she's made some management mistakes along the way. She is especially cognizant of some of the mistakes she made in handling and communicating with her employees.

I needed to be more direct; or sometimes I can be very matter of fact in the way I speak to someone and they can think I'm angry, they can think I'm upset. I need to be a little more....softer in my communication sometimes. ... Some of those interaction things that

maybe I didn't do real well or things I didn't handle the best way I could have but it wasn't as effective as I could have been. So it was like 'I'll try to do better the next time.' And I did learn... the things that I allowed people to do that maybe I should not have; I'll try to rearrange things for you and then I ended up trying to cover everything; no it needs to be your responsibility.... I probably didn't communicate as effectively as I should have; I assumed they knew things and they didn't so I had to go and straighten all that out. And those kinds of things, those kinds of things get you in trouble; sometimes they still do. But I think it happens less often than it used to.

Wendy's Management Style: The Importance of Respect

Wendy believes that her management style has been greatly affected by her working class upbringing. One value that she believes has significantly impacted the way she manages is the value of respecting others and treating them fairly.

That is another too that I found and that is respect. Respect of everybody regardless of their status in life. You treat people fairly; it doesn't matter where they came from or how they are.... I think that was very important too for my parents; they respected us, they respected other people. And they expected respect back from us.... I think it affected me in that I have a respect for a person's position; if I don't especially care for that person, they're still in a position that I need to respect.

I think I expect that from my own people. I don't care if you like me or you don't, but I have a position that you need to respect. And I think yes, it has made me; influenced the way I am. Because I need to do that; I would not be comfortable doing something else. You have to know that ... people are people and understand that they make mistakes just like you do and if you jump all over them for every mistake they make, how would you

feel if they were jumping all over you every time you made a mistake? So that's pretty much how I look at my job, I have to understand where they're coming from.... I always tell people my goal is not to fire people. My goal is to correct the problems that cause people's behavior to be bad. So if I can do that, I feel like I've done something good with my life.

I don't enjoy disciplining people at all, but sometimes you've got to.... They need this job, what are they gonna do? But on the same hand, why are they not conforming to the behavior that we need? What's preventing them from doing that? And if it's them that they just won't conform well then they can't stay here. So you've got to do what you've got to do...

Wendy says that she wants to treat her employees the way she wants to be treated by her boss. And sometimes, that means getting out of the office and doing the things that they do.

And that's a perspective too that I have; how would I want to be treated if I was in the other person's seat? How do I want to be treated by my boss? That's the way I want to treat my people that are my subordinates. That's how I feel.

Every now and then, I don't do [perform the tasks that her staff do] it as much as I used to, but every now and then I do... I can take a patient [after he or she has completed a procedure], I can take a temperature ... I can put salt on the sidewalks. I can call somebody about [the equipment]... the [equipment] itself I'm not, but if I had to, I could. But I do every now and then and sometimes that's very good for me to be out there because then I get their perspective on how it really is. I'm sitting here thinking I know what they're doing but I give meds, I can give meds, I know how to give meds. I can

understand how long it takes to do that, or how frustrating, or how long it doesn't take to do that....So yeah, I think sometimes that does help to get out there.

Learning the job her employees do is important to Wendy.

It is important to me, because how am I ever going to know what their frustrations are or... what causes some of their behavior if I don't know what they're doing every day. ... If I'm out there trying to do the job that they do, which I do poorly compared to the way they do it, and I understand what's frustrating for me when I do that, then I understand a little more what's frustrating for them. So if I'm writing policies or I'm trying to set standards, I have to know how to do it so that I can appropriately set the standards. ...On paper things can look very different than they do in reality. So I think that's important for me to know what they do, how they do, why they do the things that they do, to understand some of those things.

It is also important to Wendy that she follows the rules and respects the people in authority within the organization; even if she doesn't always agree with them. She expects this of her staff as well.

But I need to be supportive of this organization as well. Maybe they make decisions, people in positions of authority make decisions that I don't really care for, but I have to understand that they have a perspective that I don't have. They see things that I don't. So I have to understand that they are making decisions based on what they know; 'cause sometimes I make decisions that my staff doesn't understand because there's a perspective that I have, that they'll never see. So I have to think that works with people higher up.

Wendy also needs to do a good job.

I think what happens to me if I don't do a good job is an internal conflict. The guilt, you know, if I think something wasn't done as well as I could do it, I feel guilty. And that's because it's my own, it's what I impose on myself... I could have done that better; or I really should have taken my time more. I think I deal with that more in handling people; that I had to look at it and say 'oh I didn't do that very well'. And how could I have done that better. ... So those kinds of times when I don't think I've done a good job, I'm more internal... I beat up myself a little more.

Wendy has high expectations of her staff, such as working hard, arriving on time, being dependable, etc. She learned these from her working class parents.

I expect to really get a good day's work; I expect them to do that as well... there are times when I may need a break so I may go and chat with somebody or do something so I would expect that they would do the same thing; I'm not expecting eight hours of solid work.... I pretty much expect them to work as I would work. Maybe I expect that I would work a little more than they would; that I would understand the entire operations and they don't always do that... As a manager I need to make sure I know at least a little bit about everything. But I don't expect that of them because that's not their job.

It is especially difficult for Wendy when her employees call in sick.

I never call in sick.... I need to be at my job unless I'm so sick that I'm a danger to them [the patients] by being there and making them sicker. ... But the 'I just don't feel like being there' or 'I'm just a little under the weather' – you need to go and you need to be there.

Sometimes it does come through, that edge in your voice when they call in sick. I have to try and understand that maybe they are not feeling well. But some of them have no

problem to call in to take a sick day even if they're not. And that I have to, sometimes I just have to learn that that is how other people are, and not impose my, unless it's within the rules of the organization. If it's within the rules, then it's okay; but if it's not and it's my opinion....

At times, this causes an internal struggle for Wendy.

I think the thing that I struggle with most is... I don't have to do it quite so much now, but I did when I was a supervisor, when people would call off work... especially repeated offenders for crazy things. We had one [staff member] who used to call off at the first snowflake 'I can't come in, it's snowing.' Okay, literally two or three snowflakes, she would call in. I would get a call at the same time, knowing it was her. And that just used to make me crazy. ... It's hard for me to be sympathetic with somebody who's calling off, especially when I know it's going to make other people work really, really hard and I have really no resources to pull for them. It's hard for me to be 'okay take care of yourself and get better.' Okay, you're sick; get your butt to work.

So those kinds of things and I think that's because of dependability thing that's been pounded into my head. That you just don't do that; you just don't do that. You figure out what's wrong, you get it fixed and you go to work. You need to be there.

Despite those frustrations at times, Wendy knows she has good people working for her.

And I really do have a good staff, they work well... I can't really complain about them. And when I get out and talk to other people, we all have the same issues and sometimes that's good for me too because we're in an isolated environment and I think 'oh my gosh, I must have them all.' But I don't.

Wendy's Reflections on her Working Class Values and Management Style

Wendy defines the way she manages as a reflection of the way she learned to treat people growing up in her working class family.

I would say that I probably... I try to be very understanding of most things. There are certain things that I do draw the line very hard on; I listen to what they say or try to use their input. I try to do the best for them and be supportive of them when they can't fend for themselves. And by that I mean if I'm, if I'm talking to administration and they want to do something that would impact my staff and I have my staff's best interest at heart – I would think that they know that. So they know that I will be on their side, yet I am their manager. It's like being a mother, you have to be in your kids' corner, yet you are still their mother. I would hope that's the way they view me, that I always have their best interest and the patients' best interest; I don't always make the popular decisions. But I do try to understand everybody's perspectives and manage them fairly. And when I can be lenient, be lenient. And when I can't, I just have to do what I have to do. But I really want the best for them; and I really want the best for the patients; so that's the way I would hope they would see me.

Wendy has some advice for women from a working class background going into a manager role...

First of all, you need to prepare yourself with the education that would assist you with some of the skills you need; don't go in cold, it's too hard.... I think you need to help yourself to any educational programs that are out there to assist you, to help you, supply you with the tools that are available. And probably if you're going to do this, you need to do it in phases, don't take the big chunk first. Learn, learn the job; if you're looking at

nursing, learn to be a good nurse first. And then move up, because if you don't know the grass roots of it, it's very hard to oversee it. ...

How can you say to someone you have to do A, B, C and D when you haven't a clue what A, B, C and D are? So you have to get some experience under your belt; don't jump right into a management role because I don't think you have the skills you need to be a good manager. In my opinion, the best managers are the ones who know the whole process, because then you can make the best decisions... I think you need to prepare these people and give them the skills; don't dump them into a job. Trying, I don't want a boss who's trying to figure out where he's going on me; don't try it on me; I'd like you to have a little bit of an idea (laughs).

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

Wendy acknowledges that there have been times in her life where the working class values that she grew up with conflict with a manager role.

... The conflict between the working class values, lifestyle, that kind of thing and the conflict, contrast with the supervisor, more management lifestyle. They're different and that conflict and how you resolve that, and how that impacts your life... your decisions, how it gives you conflict internally 'cause you have one set of values that you grew up with and maybe another set of values that you have to use at work. So I see that conflict, sometimes it's easy to deal with and at other times, it's more difficult.

Choosing her Family over Senior Position

Wendy had to make a choice when she was the Director of Nursing, a choice between her career and that management role and her family. Leaving her position, without another one on the horizon, Wendy decided her family was more important to her.

In a previous management position ... my ... class background told me that you work an eight hour day, you get paid for eight hours and then you go home and you're done. My first management job was 24/7. That meant I got paid for eight hours and I worked 'til the work was finished and then I went home and the phone was ringing almost immediately with questions and issues. I had a family that I really felt I was shortchanging and that was very difficult for me because my working class background told me that as a mother I had dinner to fix; I had children to spend time with; I had a house to clean; I had laundry to do. And I have to do that to be a good mom, but yet I had the pull to my job. So that was a tremendous conflict internally, externally, 'til it almost got to the breaking point; at one point in my life I had to make a choice: did I stay in this job or did I have a family to go home to. So yes, that conflict was very real at that point in my life....

I resigned the position because I couldn't deal with it anymore. My family couldn't deal with it; in fact my husband gave me an ultimatum: it's either the job or us; pick one. And I certainly didn't want to give up my family. So I gave up the job and it turns out more came along and it really did work... it was a good decision... the conflict really did get overwhelming.

In addition to the internal turmoil that Wendy was facing due to her not being able to be the type of mother she wanted to be, she also struggled with some of the business practices that she was experiencing at the job.

They were asking people to take off work... work short, just not take vacation time that they were entitled to. A lot of things that I thought were not even legal. And I really struggled with that. I can't deal with that. That I can't do. So on top of all that which I was dealing with in the job, then I had the time constraints and the amount of time I had

to spend doing the job compared to the time I spent with my family which was very difficult. It was ugly.

Additionally, in that position, Wendy had value conflicts with the woman who was her superior.

My boss at that time was very driven, came from a professional household. So for her to have spent all that time at work was completely acceptable. I believe... her father was an attorney who probably spent a lot of hours away from home. [I believe] she was trying to gain acceptance in his eyes so her ability to just work all the time and move forward and move up in her career ladder was what she wanted to do to get her father's acceptance. So for her to work eighteen, twenty hours a day was nothing. And for her to be calling in or coming in every day of the week or never going away or being on vacation and checking in at work all the time was acceptable to her; wasn't to me. So her expectation was that you were available all the time. So that was very much a conflict.... and once I resolved it, I knew exactly what the problem was; I was never going to repeat it again.

Her Struggle over Working Class Gender Expectations

Wendy also struggled with the expectations that she had as a woman from a working class background; beliefs relating to what the woman of the house was expected to do.

The responsibilities of being a woman, mother and then being at home like your domestic chores and the conflict with not being able to do those domestic chores as efficiently as my mother who was home all the time. And to resolve my own and my mother's conflicts with all of that to prevent her from coming and doing my laundry when I was at work. She'd stop in to drop something off at the house and she'd be 'I folded your towels; I put them in the washer; I did a load...'. It's my job, get out of my house. But those kinds of things were difficult for me to learn; one thing... my mother was a very good scratch

cook. I love to cook and I'd love to be a scratch cook but I can't... I don't have enough time to be a scratch cook. For me to be okay with putting potato salad from on the market on the table in a nice dish as opposed to having made the potato salad sometimes caused me some conflict. But I had to get through that conflict but that was very much real. To buy a cake at the store and not bake the cake; ... and of those kinds of things; what you put on the table to eat that are prepared by another person, that you just don't have the time to do.

Wendy states that this conflict was between what she grew up with and with the expectations that she had of herself.

... the woman of the household. The lady of the house had certain expectations; it had to be spotlessly clean, the laundry had to be done, the food had to be prepared from scratch; you know everything that had to happen in your house; well it doesn't happen when you're not there five days a week. So how do you resolve that?

Struggles with Negative Aspects of Managing Employees

There are some aspects of management, for example dealing with employee discipline and terminations that bother Wendy.

The human resources things and the disciplinary things are more emotional... For me and for the person that's in the other chair, so that's what... makes it more difficult. I think it's a negative thing. Then you get those negative emotions and you feel, sometimes its anger, sometimes its fear... what kind of response am I going to get from this person? Fear is probably one that sticks out; you're afraid to talk to them or you're afraid they're going to get angry and go out to the [patient care area] and yak to everybody else and you're gonna look bad. I think that's the kind of feeling that I have, it's kind of the pit of

your stomach. And I'd pretty much say that might be fear. Anxiety... 'cause it's so difficult, it makes me anxious. ... It's definitely not a comfort area for me.

She relays an experience when she was in her first management position where she had to lay off employees. It was a very difficult time for her.

One experience that I had, early on when I was in management... we had to do a layoff. It's almost unimaginable in health care, but we did. And one of the departments got together and decided that rather than laying anyone off, each of them would take less hours. And that seemed like a pretty good thing and I thought, that's pretty good. Well it turned out to be a nightmare because it was fine the first month; after that everybody had... weeks of less pay and they were all starting to get a little grumpy about that.... They were really at each other; it really turned out to be very negative thing... it really turned out to be a nightmare.

From that experience, Wendy learned that you can't always please your employees; sometimes you need to make unpopular decisions; decisions that the employees may not like.

So as a manager you need to make the hard decisions and you need to say, no this is the way we're going to do it. Even though they might be angry at you in the beginning, over time their satisfaction will improve and be better. ...It was one thing that I tucked away like this and when you make a decision, you need to stick to your guns. ... So I think that's one thing I did learn, that sometimes when you look at the whole picture, you have a better view.

Different Expectations of Behavior for a Manager

Wendy recognizes that there are different behaviors expected of a manager than those she may have learned growing up working class.

I always had a saying that when I took this job, that there are time when you have to hobnob with the rich and famous. And you have to be able to behave in a way that's acceptable to them. And that's different from what I do at home or with my parents. My behavior is different.... You have to be nice and ... there's a very different expectation. If I go to a function that is basically management...I'm probably a different... I try to talk nicely and say hello and be polite. And if I'm at home and I don't feel like talking to ya, ... there's a different performance that you do. I don't know why, you just do. It's a part of what you have to do. I go to the functions; I'd rather go home, but sometimes you have to go where you have to go. You're expected and that's where you are.

Wendy's Reflections on Struggles between her Class Values and Manager Role

Wendy is glad she made the decision years ago to step down from the high level position at that hospital, choosing her family life over her job at that point. She reflects that it was a frightening decision for her, full of anxiety.

Well I think while you're in it, you're almost at the point where you think there's no other job; or that nobody else can do it. And I think that's what I thought; there would be no other job for me. And really that's not true; that's not true at all. Somebody told me that if you quit the job, you'll be getting calls the next day. I thought nobody would ever call me; and they did. I was getting calls, and there were opportunities that I could have gone in many different directions. I chose not to; but I could have.

Wendy had to resolve the conflict over the gender expectations because she says it became too much for her to be able to meet those expectations in the way she was accustomed to.

I had to, I just couldn't do it. And now if you come to my house and there's dust, if you don't like it, here's the rag; you may dust. If you don't like anything, you can just take

care of it. You come to see me, we'll have a clean table and there will be food, the plates will be clean... we'll have a good time. That's how I had to learn to resolve those conflicts to be satisfied, to pick the important stuff and to decide what's important. You get what you get when you come to my house.

Wendy compares herself to her Aunt Mary [pseudonym].

My Aunt [Mary] was the coolest lady. She was my mother's sister and my aunt [Mary] did all the jobs in the world. She used to drive school bus, she used to drive a coal truck, she worked as a waitress... she wasn't a domestic person. And my mother, who was very different, was very different. So right there was a conflict.

But my Aunt Mary's house was never spic and span, it was never real clean; it wasn't dirty, but it was aah, stuff everywhere; she just had stuff. ... And she was a lovely person, but she wasn't real worried about things at home. You were always welcome at her house; she always had a pot of coffee and maybe a cake, from the store.....she worked a lot; she did a lot of stuff and so therefore her house was usually in turmoil ...

And I think sometimes I was compared to her...And it was hard for my mother... my stay at home mom's self worth came from her neat, tidy, clean house... but that as my mother's sense of worth; because that's all she had. ... My Aunt Mary couldn't have cared less. If her house was dirty, she was more interested in you sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of coffee than she was in her house being clean. So I think that's what I [am] being compared to; I really was more like her than I think.....

“It’s not how I define myself”

Katharine’s Story

Katharine is in a high level management position in a non-patient care area in a community health system in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. She started her career in a staff position in a non health care agency and then accepted a position in a non-clinical area of a large health system in a nearby city. She eventually moved up to a manager and then director level position within the health system where she currently works.

Personally, I don’t think you should ever compromise who you are. Or pretend to be someone that you’re not....many people don’t know what I do. Some do, but it’s not important to me... it’s not what makes me who I am... that’s not how I define myself.

- Katharine

Growing Up Working Class

Katharine grew up in a small community in a rural area of the Mid-Atlantic region. Her father was an electrician and her mother was a part time secretary. Katharine has an older brother.

I come from a working class family... grew up on a approximately 40 acre farmette in a small community... lived there my entire life until I graduated from college...during that time, my father was an electrician, pretty much that was his job, even though he changed jobs throughout my early childhood years... My mom on the other hand worked... she was a secretary...for my entire childhood...she was the church secretary and did that on a part time basis and for the most part as I was growing up she was a stay at home mom....

Expectations that They Would Work Hard

Katharine remembers her father being a role model for hard work and expecting that she and her brother would also work hard.

I remember [her father] working overtime to...working a lot of time to get that extra pay to provide for us... I remember him being a hard worker, a very, very faithful employee to his employer.

We had chores around the house... especially as we got older, as teenagers many times friends would call 'can you go do this or can you go do that' (sighs) 'no we can't, we've got to finish our work and when we're done, we'll call ya.' And my friends understood that... they really knew that was the way our family was. And many times they just came over and helped us with the chores (chuckles) so we could go anyway.

Hard work remains an important value in her life today.

I can't remember a point in my life... where I haven't had to work hard. Whether it was growing up on a farmette where we had chores, we had things we had to do...things that were appropriate for our age, whether it was feeding the pets or whatever. But as we got older and still lived at home, we became involved in school activities, homework, those chores didn't go away, we just had to mesh them with everything else that we were responsible for. And so that basis carried with me...

So for me, it's been forty plus years of work as I defined it... you know I think through that work ethic...it taught me some very good life skills: time management, prioritization, and you know it does take hard work. All of the things that I've attained and that I'm proud of in my life, I've had to work for; nothing was handed to me on a silver spoon so to speak. So it taught me life skills but it's through that, it's the work ethic that I have to work for things and through that you're going to get rewards for that.

Parents' Expectation of Education

Katharine's parents had high expectations for her and her brother, in terms of behavior and in terms of school expectations.

My parents were strict; I mean there's no question about it... I don't ever remember my parents hitting me, but you knew that there were rules and you knew that there were standards and you know that's what you lived by. And they demanded those. They did not settle for second best in school; it was grades, you get good grades, you don't get a job because we want you to focus on school because that's going to get you into a good college and that's going to get you even further than they ever went. I remember neither of them graduated from college. My dad graduated from a trade school; my mom certainly graduated from high school but got her training in secretarial skills in high school.

They encouraged Katharine and her brother to go to college to make a better life.

We grew up in a small town, so most of my friends' parents were also blue collar workers. You know it's funny, in our town, the majority of blue collar workers did not go to college, but I also knew that my parents wanted my brother and me to go to college, to be more than they were; because they knew that a college education was where it was at. If you wanted to be more than your parents and it's not that they were ashamed of what they did, but they certainly wanted us to be successful. So they were the ones who encouraged us to go to college, to pursue a career that we were interested in, that would allow us to be self sufficient, and all of those things.

Expectations of Perseverance

Katharine's parents not only had expectations of their children, they also expected perseverance.

It was hard work, it was continuing to plug on, you know you never gave up. There was no such thing as that; I can remember my dad saying on many occasions, 'its' not 'I can't, I don't want to hear that.' It's you figure out how and we'll help you how.

I think that my parents instilled in us to continue learning, you're never ending. You know you can always learn, you can always build, you can continue to advance... even today I'm still driven by that in many ways...

This value too, continues to be an important one in her life.

There was never...my parents were not the type that accepted "I can't." That was just not acceptable. You know, you can, yes you can. Don't give up on yourself. So they were always there to support us and sometimes it was a matter of us figuring it out for ourselves. Certainly as we were to grow and mature as young adults, it was if it seems insurmountable, break it down into its finite components, you can do it. Anything that you put your mind to, you can do is their philosophy. And if I had to think of, and that has worked with me both in college where I felt like things and it wasn't so much in college, I didn't feel like I couldn't succeed in college, it was just you felt like you were overwhelmed. You just keep plugging on, it will work itself out. Whether it be in a personal situation where I felt insecure about something or figure it out, it will work itself out.

The Importance of Family

Katharine learned from her family background that family time is important. They did things together as a family.

I can remember we had family projects. My dad was very much a handy man... he remodeled our whole house...putting in kitchen cabinets and the bathrooms and all. We

learned a lot, it was really a family project.... he was also a TV repairman at one point in time. That was one of his earlier jobs right out of high school and he ordered this TV kit, it was a console TV and he (chuckles) made it a family project to build this TV and we actually did it! I mean it was amazing all the parts and all the things, but we did it... I'd never seen the workings of a TV but all the little dials, I don't remember all the terms anymore... you had to color code it and I was maybe 12 or 13 but that was one of my jobs, to match all the color coded things together...

The Use of Common Sense

Katharine's parents, especially her father, emphasized the importance of using your brain. He didn't call it using your common sense, he called it grey matter.

It was my father who really used the term [common sense]... his term was grey matter.

'Use the grey matter, use the grey stuff in your head' and what he meant by that was use your brain and think, you know, really common sense and that type of thing. He used it very often, I mean whether he was frustrated with us because we didn't think or just out of 'now, you know better' so use the grey stuff.

Things he knew he had taught us, around the house or life in general through experiences... that he knew, we knew. You have the common sense, use it. He definitely knew book smart, you learn what you learn in school but also your mom and I are going to teach you what's important in life. That's really where he got back to common sense and I think really if I look back, it was really a matter of teaching us through experience... reinforced that we've told you this, we've taught you this. These are important things in life; things that you need to keep with you and stand by.

They'd probably view it [common sense] more important than book smart; anybody can go to school and get book smarts, but it's those kind of things, skills that get you – common sense is going to get you above and beyond the book smart.

And it's not like they had to tell us everything either. They'd give us the basis for the knowledge, for how you problem solve, for how you build on common sense. And as you grow and mature through life, you're going to have experiences that are much more challenging and this is the basis....

Katharine emphasizes that this value is critical to her today.

And today that means so much to me; I get very frustrated within my professional career when people don't think. It really frustrates me and I think it gets back to my upbringing and again the reinforcement of use your brain, use your grey stuff.

It's just ingrained in me; it's just in my upbringing. Ironically...I do that with my own children...maybe not in the exact same way my dad did or my mom, but use common sense and common sense is important.

Her Father's Negative View of Management

Katharine's father was an electrician by trade and a union steward at his place of employment.

He had definite views of management, negative ones that he shared with his family from time to time.

My father was a blue collar worker, an electrician... but he was also the shop steward for the labor union where he worked. So over dinner table discussions and things like that, my brother and I would hear what was going on and he was very much an advocate and as spokesperson for his peers, you know the blue collar workers that he was representing as shop steward in the union. And as you can tell, he was very anti-management. And

that came across very clearly in conversations and it is interesting of his perspective being a blue collar worker and how he perceived management. 'They get paid a lot, but they don't do much.'... It's interesting to have had that experience and to realize what the union was all about... at the age of 14, 15 getting exposed to things about contracts and labor negotiations that most teenagers never even know about because they're not as involved as my dad was.

Katharine's Reflections on her Working Class Childhood

Katharine believes that her background growing up in working class family has impacted her greatly today. The values of education and family were ones that she distinctly remembers being important to her mother and passed on to her. Katharine elaborates on what she believes her mother's dream would have been for her...

Well the first thing that comes to mind was to get a college education – she told me that in high school and I can still remember the day I graduated from college and her telling me how proud she was that I had accomplished that.

And I think the second thing, would be to really truly value my family and friends... how important family has been throughout my life and I'm particular with my friends. I really draw the line with who my friends are, there are a lot of qualities that I look for in a friend. Probably the biggest one being trust. So those values and then through that it goes back to that statement that really defines who I am. I value that so much that in essence my career takes a second tier, a second fiddle, behind family and friends.

And finally never compromise who I am. You know, I was created with qualities and never compromise that. My parents really encouraged us, we were great people, we had a lot of positive things going for us and just never compromise that in whatever walk of

life, whether it be on a social basis, on a professional basis...And that has caused struggles...

Career and Manager Experience

After high school, Katharine went to a regional university and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in a business related career. Her first position after college was in a well known company headquartered in a nearby city. She was there for four years before moving into a local health care system.

[I] graduated from high school second in my class and went on to [XXX] University. I knew I wanted to be [career she chose] from the time I was in 8th grade... just kind of set my career path even at that point in time... I was in the academic curriculum in high school but took some XXX courses that were part of the business curriculum just to get an understanding, you know, kind of get a better understanding of what all that meant... went on to [XXX] University and graduated with a bachelor's in XXX, and really thoroughly enjoyed it the whole four years I was there.... I landed a job with [well known firm] in [nearby city] and worked as [profession related to major in college].... I decided I wanted to go back for my Masters' Degree; so I went got my Masters' Degree... but before I went on to get my Masters' Degree, I also got my [professional] certification... I decided to leave [the firm she worked for] and started to work for a hospital ...when I worked at [the hospital] I really didn't have a lot of supervisory experience. I was just kind of building my health care experience at that point in time.

Katharine's health care experience at that hospital helped her gain a position at the community health system. It was in various roles with the community health system that she began to build

her management career. She thinks the key to her management career was in a project management role during a systems implementation.

I had a lot of experiences there where I was in varying roles in that organization. I think the key one though that really was pivotal in my move into management was being pulled out of [her department] arena to be a project manager over a project... it was actually a systems implementation.... I was the new kid on the block really when it came to those people who had years of experience and it was a great team building, you know to hone my skills. It was a wonderful experience and I think through that, the administration at that time recognized my leadership skills and decided to put me in a role where I could be a manager. And I took a [manager] position after that project was completed [back in her previous department]. And from there moved up to being [in a high level management position in] for the entire health system.... I see it as kind of building blocks in getting me to where I am now, but it's really been within [community health system] that management skill and leadership role was really honed.

Daunting Transition to a Management Role

Katharine's recollection of her initial transition into the project manager role was that it was initially somewhat overwhelming.

At first it was very intimidating. And I knew a lot of the people... I talked with them and worked with them. But coming into a role where you're actually seen as the leader of people who have years of more experience are much more versed in... areas I wasn't versed in....

But Katharine drew upon her values of hard work and perseverance to make the team come together to fulfill its purpose.

They quickly realized that I was not a tyrant (chuckles)... I mean I was there really to pull them together, to make this happen, to be the heavy I guess when issues arose and I was there for them.... The agenda for meetings were always out in advance, they knew that was the forum for them to get issues on the table and that they were heard and listened to and that there was going to be some action taken on that particular whatever it was...

Like I said, it was very intimidating at first, but as I look back on it, not that that particular implementation was (chuckles), it was rocky... but we drove on. We knew that there was a goal in mind and we had to continue to steer on and move on...

Katharine attributes her success as the project manager to her willingness to say she didn't know; to let the team members teach her.

I think I humbled myself. I really did. In many respects I let the...who I dealt with one on one, really teach me and then I ...kind of took that in and then started leading them.... you need to educate me on what this is all about...it was almost like I was a servant... So this systems implementation was just not me and it really related to work flow and process so I began to relate to all of that. I think that's the biggest thing. I really did not come in with arrogance. I was more, very humble and willing to learn...

Katharine's Management Style: Treat People as your Equal

Katharine's background has impacted the way she manages people today. She attributes her management style to the core values she learned growing up; "The real key ones – honesty, respect, treat people as...your equal, again I go back to hard work as one. That IS a core value. I'm sure there are more... those are the key ones that come to mind."

She gives the following example to explain how she uses those values in her management style.

I think my relationship with my staff... is a real good testimonial to how these values have really changed the whole culture of that department. From where it was when I worked there as a subordinate and worked there as a manager and ultimately where it is today; I think you see a lot more teamwork. People are more willing to be honest with each other... There's an awful lot of respect for people's talents within that department...numerous examples of where we had to work together; we get asked to do more with less. Less people but more tasks so we have to draw on those talents and have people step up and do things...there's just a lot of camaraderie. People truly do respect each other and we are accomplishing things.

She realizes that everyone on the team is important to its success.

I think I manage my staff in particular with them knowing that my success is really their success. That the reason I'm successful is because they're there to assist me. We really are, yes I am their boss, but on a day in and day out basis, I really want them to know that we are equals... you know, the tough decisions are to be made and you know definitely I'm there, I'm there to support them and they know that . And so I think they're willing to go the extra mile... for their own self satisfaction and for the department and for me.

Katharine has fostered this sense of teamwork by being supportive of her staff.

When I first took on the position...our [department's] reputation was less than stellar. That took a lot of me intervening, when we were getting a lot of backlash or a lot of issues or things like that where I would take on the role of 'you know what, you communicate to me, I'll handle it.' And so through that they saw me taking a very active role, keeping them out of the mayhem so to speak, getting things resolved and acting very quickly on things... So through my actions, 'well okay, I made a phone call, it's been

resolved.' they were like "wow"...If they can't resolve it, they escalate it up to me because they know I'll do something with it.

Boy, progress was slow... but as I look back, I can say 'I'm glad I did it; I'm glad I was there' because there's a different staff, even though it's the same people, there's a different staff than there was...And through that I've been able to expand their role in the organization. Others look to them with confidence; they know that I have the confidence in them...

Katharine attributes this emphasis on teamwork to her background.

A big part of it was teamwork... when you have 40 acres of land to take care of... we had a large garden, we had a lot of lawn. I mean by the time we got done mowing the lawn and trimming and all that we had to start over again. I mean it was pretty much (chuckles)... especially if it rained a lot. We always had something to do and it took all of us... my dad worked swing shift and he wasn't always there so my mom and my brother and I were many times... to get the job done. My dad was working overtime or whatever so I think again that instilled in me a work ethic that is strong today as well as teamwork. It's all about everyone working together for the common goal...I use that management methodology every day and try and make others who are part of a team that that's what they should strive for.

Her father's disdain for management and his pro-employee values have affected Katharine's approach with the employees she manages.

I'm not a manager in a union shop...but maybe through his experience and how he relayed his experience...through that conversation and through those values that are very important to me...Yes, I'm a manager, but we all have opinions, we all have thoughts, we

all have feelings. We have many things in common; we're not all the same, but you know things that are in common that I can't possibly look at you as 'I'm better than you.' I never think about that... that was probably one of those life experiences that I never really rolled up and said okay, how did I get to who I am today. But I'm sure through those conversations... I remember them. And I'm sitting here twenty years later saying I still remember what went on. It definitely had an impact...

The "don't quit" attitude her parents instilled in her as a child, has a major impact on the way Katharine manages today.

I've had numerous occasions where I've been assigned tasks in things that I thought were truly insurmountable, My staff has come to me and said 'how in the world are we going to do this?' And I've said back to them, 'we'll figure it out. Let's sit down and figure it out.' I've heard my boss say 'you'll figure it out.' It's like sometimes that's a little bit discouraging but maybe I've built that world... I don't think it's really a perception, it's reality because you have to figure it out...if you continue to break it down into its finite components and just work at it, you can solve it, you can do it.

And really I think the other thing is that... the 'I can't' that's not something you know until proven. I'm not going to settle for you can't. Yes we can. I mean if we look at all the talents in this room, all the talents that are around this table or whatever circumstances you're in, there's a lot of 'I can.' We've proven that again and again... by tasks that have seemed insurmountable but we've proven in the end to accomplish them and take a lot of pride in that.

Katharine finds that her father's emphasis on common sense is something that is important to her in the way that she manages and deals with others today as an adult.

I've said it to my staff and on the converse, I've been frustrated with a peer or another manager or somebody who just didn't think about something... or who had come to a conclusion without thinking it through. We all do that from time to time, but I've often joked with my staff and said if there were one tee shirt I'd love to wear to work, it would have a picture of a brain and the word 'Think' with an exclamation point.

Katharine's Reflections on the Impact of her Values on her Career and Manager Experience

Katharine feels she has proven herself as a manager through the transitions and the experiences she's had at the community health system where she works.

It was a transition, it was starting out on a very low level job... but it was really proving myself really along the way... it was really a proving ground, it wasn't like I was handed it on a silver platter and here you go. It was really my way up and it was, at times it was difficult.

She attributes her successes to the values she learned growing up in a working class family. She especially notes the importance of hard work.

It's a lot of hard work... I worked and went to school and continued to expand, always looking at stepping stones ... of the career path. And knowing that I loved the [profession she chose], having the opportunity to move over to that... project management role is really unique. And having to work with clinicians and that was an excellent stepping stone because it gave me a lot of knowledge about what actually goes on in the clinical side so it helped me understand operations a lot better...

So I think it was gradual growth... I'm a true believer that you have to work in the trenches so to speak. I think it makes you a better manager because you understand the amount of time something takes, the tasks that are involved. And I think from the people that work for you or with you, they know that you've been there. They know that first of all, they can't pull the wool over your eyes and they may try it and things like that... I think they see that and that's a way of earning respect. And I think respect is a big piece of success for any manager in an organization.

When Class Values and Manager Role Collide

Katharine believes that the experiences she's had and the values she grew up with continue to impact her today, not only as a manager but as a person as well. There have been times when those values and experiences have collided with the expectations of her in her career, and she's had struggles at times in dealing with them.

When her Hard Work isn't Acknowledged

There was a time when Katharine worked for a previous boss who is no longer at the health system where she felt she was doing all the work, but not getting the credit for it. She chose to react in a way that reflected her values as she dealt through that situation.

I was working hard as a [professional position] building basically a system that did not exist at the [community health system]. And the reason I got the job was because I had done the same job at [regional competitor], I helped them with a similar implementation. What was happening was I was doing all the work without getting any of the credit. And when you're new to an organization...I realized my talents and know what I'm good at and things like that, it's kind of tough to break through that... I wasn't really used to that.

It wasn't about 'yes I need the credit,' but it was like 'why?'...If somebody's doing the work, there's no question in my mind that I would give them the credit for it.

Ultimately, that manager was asked to leave the organization and Katharine continued to have successes and move up in the managerial ranks of the health system.

Not everybody has the same management style and there were particular managers who saw me as a threat. And I think that was very challenging... it wasn't about me seeing the demise of them, it was really about the common good, the common goal and really seeing. And in the end, if you stick with you know, it will prove itself... the good ... will shine through. And that's really what happens...you can't keep the good man down or whatever you want to say. That really has a lot of merit.

That experience has continued to impact her today.

That's true for me as a manager today, that I am very willing to give credit where credit is due to the people that are really doing the work. And many times I think within the department that I oversee there has been a change in culture. In the past maybe they've kind of been hidden at their desks and maybe not being seen, but now they're getting involved... and being part of meetings and having open discussions and really feeling that they're a stakeholder in the eventual outcome of what they're meeting about or changes coming on board.

Refusing to Compromise her Values

Katharine explains that there have been times when the values she learned growing up working class conflicted with the values of a boss or peer. Here she recounts one example in particular:

I did have a boss at one point in time who was unfair, was selfish, lacked self confidence, was not honest. And how did I deal with that? Don't change yourself, don't change my

values to conform, to get by or to make my life easier with this particular boss. But stick to...those core values and in the end you'll come out ahead. And that's exactly what happened. This particular boss is not in the same role they were...and I've continued to move up in the organization and ...I know I'm respected by my peers and all the things that I value, I did not compromise based upon this particular situation. It was tough; I will tell you that it left... I'm scarred by that particular experience, but you know you learn from it. And you move on...and I know now that I won't ever put myself in a situation where I...you know I'd move out of that situation. Because I'm more knowledgeable than I was then...So it was a struggle, it was really a struggle for me to continue on...

Choosing Values over a Chance at a Senior Position

Katharine realizes that she is on a management track that would logically take her to a senior management position. She is unsure if that is what she wants.

To be honest with you, I've never had and still don't have aspirations of being a [senior manager in her profession] which would naturally be the next step. Particularly at this point in my life... what's nice about my current role is that I can really manage personal and professional lives. My personal life is very, very important to me and I don't want to sacrifice that. I realize that making the next step clearly, there would be sacrifices that I'm not willing to make right now. ...I don't know where I go from here... And the reason I say that is that this is not about me as a manager, but there are other sides of me. The whole personal side of me saying, 'you know, what values have I given to my children? Have I really raised them to be the future adults of the world that I want them to be...?' There's this whole other personal side that's yet to be defined. That until I get there, until my children are old enough... that I set the stage for them to be responsible, successful

adults... those core values... they're honest and truthful and people respect them and they treat others like they want to be treated... that they're really fair...

A number of years ago, Katharine actually turned down a senior management position because she felt it wasn't right for her and didn't mesh with her values at that time in her life.

It was at a [local hospital] and I was actually offered the [executive management] position. And felt there was no way; [her son] was only... I didn't even have [her daughter] at the time... There was no way I was prepared to go into the role and I knew it. So I declined the position; it was met with a reaction that I was quite surprised by from the [administration] at the time... it was almost like I am in a book somewhere because I refused to do something that this [administration] thought I was ready to do. ...I made the absolute right decision. I am a better person today for that decision that I made.

I have seen so many people make that same mistake... going into a position only for it not to work out... they made a decision that was not right for them....I've seen so many people go into those roles being one person and then in a matter of a year, they're somebody different because they've changed. And they've given up those values or the fight... they come in fresh and then boy, they're changed.

Yeah, I had the opportunity to make a lot of money, to be part of the inner circle... but it just wasn't for me. And I can tell you today, I don't know if it's still right for me... I think because of the meshing, again the sacrifices that I would need to make on my personal side. I think there would be certain of my values that would be challenged and that would be a struggle. But I think more so on the personal side. I'm just not willing to do it; I wasn't willing to do it... years ago and I'm not willing to do it today.

Career Doesn't Define Her

Katharine doesn't define her identity by her career. By her own admission, she is much more than just the professional position that she holds.

My career, that's a dangerous path, that's a very dangerous path to go down if your career defines who you are... the career could end tomorrow. It's not within your control so to speak. I mean things can change within an organization within a day; one day you're part of it and the next day you're not. To define yourself, if that's what defines you, that's a crushing blow – that is a huge crushing blow to your self... to a lot of things...yeah, it's important but it is just one little bit of who I am....

Katharine's Reflections on the Clash of her Values and her Manager Role

Katharine has had experiences in her professional and management career when she's had her values challenged and has had internal struggles over how to deal with certain situations. These various situations have served in many ways to strengthen her values from her working class background; she makes decisions and chooses her behaviors based on them.

Those kinds of things that I think do... they definitely change you and ... I think differently about things in my life at this point in time because of some circumstances. Those in particular that happened, I think I've learned a lot from those and I'm a better leader today because of it.

It made me realize that what my priorities in life should be... I think it's very important to keep those priorities in mind... Faith, my religious beliefs...it's a very strong part of my life... family certainly is very important...I think differently about people... You think differently about what it means to be a peer, what it means to be a supervisor or leader within an organization... And through that, I've chosen another path...

[Katharine] do not compromise what you're doing. Those are your core values and that is who you are. Just stay the course.

One vivid experience that she went through has helped her realize that this is the right choice.

I think a big part of it is seeing a very successful woman [in a senior executive position at a health system] who seemingly had it all; there was nothing that she should be regretting... ended up taking her own life... from my perspective her life was defined by her career. Her life was the hospital; her life was her career.... Not that I would have changed the way I thought about my career but that particular instance changed for the rest of my life how I thought about my career.... It is not the single thing that defines me as a person... I don't talk a lot about it... I'm not bragging, I'm not; it's just not who I am.

Chapter Four Summary

The stories of nine women who came from working class origins and have become managers are presented in this chapter. Each story is unique, yet there are similarities. All of the women have said they have a strong work ethic that impacts them as adults, as professionals and as managers, for example. However, the path each of the women has taken to the place she is situated today and each woman's interpretation of the experiences that has gotten her to that place is different. Each of the women experienced some ambivalence when her working class values have been challenged; every one of the women has chosen her own way of dealing with those challenges.

In Chapter Five, I present a discussion of the stories; looking at similarities and differences in them. Using a critical feminist lens, I investigate some of the experiences of ambivalence relating to gender and class identity, and examine the impact of the dogma and power relations of the dominant society upon these women in their manager roles.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDING

In Chapter Three, I explained that my purpose in this study was to use qualitative research techniques, specifically narrative inquiry to explore with a critical lens, the stories of working class women who have become managers in a health care organization. I also indicated that when I analyzed the narratives, I utilized a holistic approach to the analysis..

In Chapter Four, I included each woman's story – a story I facilitated, but she created. These stories are powerful testimonies to their experiences; experiences as unique as each woman herself.

In this Chapter, I present the findings through the lens of Critical Feminism. I then discuss the similarities and differences across the narratives, including how examples of these similarities and differences result in the doctrines of the dominant, patriarchal society being maintained, reproduced or defied. I also look at conflicts that the women experienced as a result of the impact of power relationships upon them and their experiences.

Presenting the Findings Using a Critical Feminist Lens

Through the lens of this critical feminist study, I looked for aspects of hegemony such as the internalization of the values of the dominant culture in the women's lives, the impact of power relations on the women's experiences and the replication or challenging of the dogma of the dominant culture. The power of these stories lies within each individual story and how it resounds with the reader. I believe that these narratives reveal the "interpretations and values of the individual" (Elliott, 2005, p. 39); thereby giving voice to each of the women who is telling her story. This was a critical feminist study, and as such it was important to me as the researcher that the voices of the participants were heard.

What follows is a collective presentation of the similarities and differences across the narratives, including examples of the impact of working class origins and values upon the women in their professional and managerial roles.

Presenting the Findings

As the reader can see from the narratives presented in Chapter Four, each reflected the storyteller's identity within the context of her managerial role.

How individuals recount their histories – what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience – all shape what individual can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, quoted in Riessman, 1994, p. 68).

Narratives can be emancipatory (Elliott, 2005); storytelling can be transformative (Patton, 2002)). But “meaning-making also comes from comparing stories” (Patton, 2002, p. 478) and in telling the stories of their lives, women frequently recount emotions, experiences, desires, and role identities in ways that match gendered expectations put forth by the dominant, patriarchal society (Bloom, 2002).

In this section, first I review the commonalities and differences in the narratives related to four general themes: Strong work ethic; Treating people fairly and with respect; Gendered roles and family expectation; and Expected behaviors of a manager. Then each of these themes is examined for aspects of replication or challenges of power relations and patriarchy. Finally, conflicts that participants had regarding each of these aspects are reviewed, with particular attention paid to the role(s) that power relationships played in those conflicts.

Strong work ethic

When the participants were encouraged to tell me stories about their working class background and the values, every one of the women mentioned a strong work ethic. This was usually one of the first two values mentioned and discussed.

Commonalities and differences

All of the women stated that they learned the value of having a strong work ethic at home from their parents. Margaret, for example, says that hard work was emphasized, especially by her father who said that “if you don’t work hard for every dime you make, you’re not worth a whole lot.” She also held up her mother as a role model for hard work and said the expectation was that “you did it well, you did it quickly and you didn’t settle for anything that was not perfect.”

However, not all of the women defined a strong work ethic the same way. Many of the participants equated strong work ethic with being at and coming to work regardless of how one felt physically or other things that may be going on in your personal life. For example, Amy said, “Times that I have not felt up to par – had a cold... sore throat...I just come to work. It’s hard for me to call off sick from work. I guess I see that as part of a strong work ethic.” The women learned this at home; Jennifer said both her parents had strong work ethics, but she believes her father had the strongest impact on her: “calling in sick was frowned upon. He would go to work all the time, even on days when he’d be sick, he’d get up and go to work.”

The expectation that you will come to work regardless of how you feel affects the way they manage their employees. Attendance at work is part of the expectations that they had for the people who work for them. For example, Olivia said “I hold those same standards to myself and I hold those same standards to those people that report to me... I don’t tolerate a lot of absenteeism.”

On the other hand, some of the women equated strong work ethic with perseverance, in terms of seeing things through. For example, Ann said she takes her commitments seriously: “When I wanted to do something, I always wanted to succeed at it. That’s how my parents brought me up... you finish it to the end; they don’t see quitters. I never wanted to be a quitter.” This value impacts the way she approaches her manager role, “I think you have to prove your work ethic, you have to prove yourself...you can’t quit....You take on what you’re responsible for and you have to see it to the end....”

Still others equated a strong work ethic with putting in long hours, physical labor and accomplishing a great deal. Again, this was learned at home. Lisa recalled a number of occasions when she physically went to work with her parents and saw them working hard:

When I was little, my dad used to go up there on Saturday mornings.. because he didn’t finish what he needed to finish by the end of the day on Friday....my mom used to take my tricycle up...and I would ride around between the pallets of wood on my tricycle while my parents were working...my mom worked at the restaurant...and I’d help fold silverware in the napkins....I was exposed to it...seeing them do the work...

This exposure to a strong work ethic has impacted her management style because she has those same expectations of others: “I think it impacts how I view other people’s work ‘cause I think that I always expect other people to perform the way I think I should perform...”

Replicating or challenging the internalization of a strong work ethic

Several women’s narratives indicated they have replicated the expectation that if you work hard, your work will be noticed, you will be recognized for working hard and you will be successful. For example, Wendy’s comments regarding going to work even when she is ill are tied with her expectations of a positive result if she complies with that expectation; stating that

“you did a good job, you were dependable. And you could expect a good wage and a good life if you did that.” She not only saw that in her parents; she lives this value today as a manager. “I don’t call in sick...I need to do well at work...to do a good job. There are certain things that are expected of me and I need to live up to.”

Katharine’s words also show that she believed hard work will be rewarded:

So for me, it’s been forty plus years of work as I defined it... and you know it does take hard work. All of the things that I’ve attained and that I’m proud of in my life, I’ve had to work for; nothing was handed to me on a silver spoon so to speak.... it’s the work ethic that I have to work for things and through that, you’re going to get rewards for that...

Not only did their own words and behaviors indicate they have internalized this value for themselves, their behavior as a manager indicated they continue to replicate this expectation.

While Ann also said that the expectations that she has for herself came from her working class background, reinforcing what was expected of her. “I think from working class background, it’s important if you do something you do it well. That’s what you’re supposed to do,” she also has those same expectations of those she manages, “I... associate work ethic with showing up on time, being there for the job, being reliable and when you’re asked to do something, follow through with it. Don’t expect others to pick up the load.”

Margaret acknowledged that as a manager she has high expectations that her staff will have a strong work ethic. In this way she replicated the values she learned at home.

I learned that at home hearing things that my father said. I still have some of that in me....When I see a self starter, when I see [an employee] who resolves issues...who when they’re finished with their work don’t just think ‘oh I’m finished’ but they’ll go in other areas and ‘is there anything I can do?’ ... I find I really admire it and I take note of thatI

also know that people who just sit and talk... and it's not that I think that those people aren't worth a dime, just that someone else is worth a quarter or a dollar (laughs).

In some cases, while recognizing they continued to replicate the value of hard work, some of the women realized that the internalization of this expectation has not only impacted them, but had the potential to be detrimental to their management style. Gracie, for example, saw her father driven to "make hay while the sun shines" and that "when you're working, you work hard." This has definitely impacted her today and the way she manages; "got my work ethic from my father...picked way too much of that up ... didn't know when to cut it off. I still struggle with that... trying not to get so... driven that no one will work with me..." Jennifer indicated that the internalization of strong work ethic can potentially be negative. "I believe any job you're in...Give everything a hundred percent...that was one of the strong messages I got from my parents... work ethics...work is the priority; you can't survive without it. I think I ended up being a workaholic."

Not all of the women wanted to continue to replicate this value, especially if it can have a negative impact upon them. However, when that internalized value was challenged, guilt can result. For example, Lisa recognized that when her parents worked long hours, they were being taken advantage of. As a result, she tries to balance her work and family time.

I've seen how hard my parents work... working extra hours... they were like taken advantage of at work ... people knew that ask them, they'd do it...I really did view it as they did a lot of hard work for not a lot of acknowledgement for that...They were such hard workers... and when I do step back and slow down, I feel guilty; and sometimes I feel like maybe I've not given enough.

Experiences of conflict surrounding the value of a strong work ethic

As a result of the internalization of the expectation that they have a strong work ethic, some of the women experienced conflicts regarding this value. Sometimes those conflicts arose when the behavior of others clashed with their expectation. For example, Wendy had a hard time when her employees call in sick, because being at work, being dependable is very important to her. She said,

Sometimes it does come through that edge in your voice when they call in sick... I think the thing that I struggle with the most is...when people would call off work...especially repeated offenders for crazy things...it's hard for me to be sympathetic...especially when I know it's going to make other people work really, really hard... I think it's because of the dependability thing that's been pounded into my head; that you just don't do that. You figure out what's wrong, you get it fixed and you go to work. You need to be there.

In other cases, the behavior the women themselves exhibited as a result of the internalization of this value caused conflict with others who may not appreciate how strong this expectation was for them. For example, Gracie recognized that her strong work ethic can be overwhelming to the people she manages and this has at times caused a conflict with her staff.

I can now appreciate my father and how he was tough on the job site and thank God that I have good team members that can come to me and say 'you drive us crazy.' After you pull that knife out, you realize that they did the best thing for you... I have pretty high expectations of my crew....they'll come and say 'you'd never let us get away with that.' I think just setting our expectations, making expectations clear and letting people find their own way of doing it... And that's tough.

Conflicts also arose when this internalized expectation of hard work was directly challenged by others; at times by others in a position of power. Lisa had external conflicts with her superiors because her expectations of herself in terms of working hard were not valued by her boss, who came from a more privileged “background as opposed to the working class so that [the boss] operates from a different mindset.”

...my supervisor actually made a comment to me about how I needed to slow down; like I was basically working too fast or doing too much...comment to me was ‘you need to chill out, you need to slow down’...[the boss] made a comment to me one time...sometimes my expectations of others is up here (lifts hand up) when maybe it should be here (moves hands lower)...And I was really taken aback because I’m someone who prides themselves on being able to get things done...because that’s how my parents were.

At other times, the conflicts were internal, when they felt that they weren’t meeting the expectations of that strong work ethic as they had defined it for themselves. Wendy said, “I think what happens to me if I don’t do a good job is an internal conflict; the guilt, you know if I think something wasn’t done as well as I could do it, I feel guilty....I beat myself up...”

In a poignant example of an internal conflict relating to this value, Ann told of an experience when she was in a higher position within the organization and was unhappy with some of the actions she was asked to take in that position. Although there were other values involved in her decision to step down from that position, part of her internal struggle revolved around her reluctance to quit.

It was a very difficult time because there was a lot of internal strife in how I handled this position, but I would never quit.... And I didn’t want to quit... I wanted to give my all, but

sometimes there are things beyond your control that you have to say, 'this is it, I just can't do anymore; I gave my all.'

As a result of these internal conflicts, some of the women made a conscious effort to change their behaviors relating to this expectation. For example, Olivia recalled that in a former management position, the time expectations put on her by both the organization and herself became too overwhelming and caused a great deal of internal anguish for her. She worked late into the evenings and came in on the weekends to get work done. She realized that this was not healthy and vowed never to work that way again.

And it came to a point where I realized... it was the first time I was ever in a role like that; I really, really gave it a hundred and fifty percent to the point where I was exhausted... that's just me to be able to do a fantastic job for everything and everyone, every time. And I think that after working that way for a while, I realized that was impossible; so you do the best you can, as much as you can. And it may not be enough for some people... I won't do that again... I just did what I had to do.

Summary of theme: Strong work ethic

Each of the women participants spoke of the importance of the value of a strong work ethic and the impact of this value on her professional and managerial life. Some of the women experienced an external conflict when a strong work ethic (as they defined it individually) was not valued by others such as their superiors or their subordinates. Others experienced an internal conflict when they felt that they were not meeting their own expectations or the expectations that were instilled in them by their working class upbringing.

Another value that was very strong in the narratives was that of treating people fairly.

Treating people fairly/with respect

A second common theme across the narratives was that of treating people fairly and with respect. All of the participants talked about this in their narratives.

Commonalities and differences

Most of the participants equated treating people fairly with treating them with respect, kindness, and recognizing that there were things that happen to them that required managers to be flexible. This respect and kindness to others was learned at home, from their working class parents. The value is not only reflected in how they treated others in their daily lives, but also how they managed.

Margaret, for example, said she learned this value “from my mother in basic right and wrong ways of treating people. Everyone, I don’t care what they do, everyone deserves respect; everyone deserves to be acknowledged and thanked at the end of the day...” Not only does she believe that everyone deserves to be treated with respect, she practiced this: “You treat people with respect and appreciate them...I found that has always worked for me... I give positive feedback...I will always be kind...”

This value was modeled in Wendy’s home as well; encouraged even more strongly as a result of having a sister with a disability: “Coming from a household that had a handicapped person, I think it was very important to my parents that we all got treated as much the same as we could...” But it also came from their modeling in the way they treated other people: “Where you came from or what you did or high up you were really wasn’t important to them...” She also saw that as impacting her as a manager today:

I have to treat all the employees the same that work for me. I have the same expectation of myself... I would expect to treat everybody the same regardless, ‘cause that’s what I

was taught. Nobody is more important or less important, they just have different jobs; and we all have different roles to play, but without any one of us... the whole thing could fall apart. But I think that came from my background, too....

At times, this expectation of treating people fairly came about as a result of seeing how people were treated unfairly, parents for example. In this illustration, Lisa recognized that her parents didn't get a lot of recognition for what they did; this made it important to her that she recognized and acknowledged the staff that report to her:

Growing up...I kind of felt like they had positions that weren't very glamorous; there was no glory in what they did. I don't think they got a lot of recognition for what they did, but they did it anyway. ...even if I'm not handing out a bonus, I'm at least thanking them or trying to acknowledge them in some way; that they know that I appreciate what they've done....I think it's the little things that mean a lot in that regard...

In several cases, the women grew up hearing a negative view of management from at least one of their parents. Ann, Lisa, Katharine and Gracie all indicated that this has affected the way they treat their employees. In this example, Gracie recalled both of her parents having negative things to say about their respective managers. She consciously chose to manage differently.

I remember my dad and his friends sitting around talking about their bosses...My father would have died if his boss would have come on the job site in a pair of jeans and ...dug in and helped them do the work...And in the sewing factory, my mom talks about her boss, who was a man...she wasn't supposed to be doing steps and he would make her take goods down to the next floor...I think I've earned the respect of my staff because I do

work hard. When they are short [staffed] they know that I'll be there; they know that I'll step in and help them.

In her narrative, Katharine indicated that her father was very involved in the union and there were always tensions between labor and management. She recalled:

My father was a blue collar worker...but he was also the shop steward for the labor union....So over dinner discussions...he was very much an advocate and spokesperson for his peers... He was very anti-management...through his experience and how he relayed his experience....through that conversation...Yes, I'm a manager, but we all have opinions, we all have thoughts, we all have feelings...I can't possibly look at you as 'I'm better than you.' I'm sure through those conversations... It definitely had an impact...

Many of the women equated treating their employees fairly and with respect with digging right in there and working side by side with their staff. In this example, Ann related the negative view of management she heard from her father to the fact that she is willing to "get her hands dirty." "He would make comments about certain managers... all hell would break loose and they would not get up and help....they don't want to get their hands dirty... He would talk about peons...they had the attitude that work was for peons..." As a manager, Ann is willing to get in there and work side by side with her staff.

I had to build trust...I got my hands dirty...I was in there working... I just worked with them directly and I took call. I worked...and started to build that trust...My management style is I like to work directly with the staff...I like to be considered as part of a team, not ...as someone that is in an office...secluded and is making decisions and not getting them involved....

Other women shared this view as well. Lisa, Gracie, Margaret, Olivia and Wendy all talked about the importance of being willing to step in and do what needed to be done to help their staff. This helped them show respect and fairness to them. For instance, Wendy stated that it is important to her to treat her employees the way she would like to be treated. At times, that meant doing the job tasks that they do.

How would I want to be treated if I was in the other person's seat?...I can take a patient... I can take a temperature... I can put salt on the sidewalks. I can call somebody [about the equipment]...sometimes that's very good for me to be out there because then I can get their perspective on how it really is...I can understand how long it takes to do that, or how frustrating... I think that it's important for me to know what they do, how they do, why they do the things that they do...

Margaret, too, shared that her management style included working side by side with the staff when needed and doing other things that needed to be done.

Dig right in there with the staff... People notice those things and I think that's important...when given the opportunity is there, it's nice to do those things that might take you five or ten minutes...it's going to help that [employee]; it's going to take that thing from them so they can focus on something else. They notice; just like I notice what they did and didn't do; they notice what I did and didn't do....

In some instances, the expectation of treating others fairly was not only learned at home, but was reinforced by the experiences the women have had in their lives. For example, Olivia recognized that the experiences she's had in her own life have made her even more flexible in the way she managed her staff, even more so than perhaps her working class background would have dictated:

I think I am definitely more flexible because I have so many people working for me that are single mothers. I was a single mother for a while; there are a lot of things that I understand and probably am more flexible with than my parents would be...going through my divorce, coming in covering up black and blue marks...I know what that's like and not everybody understands that; and not everybody cares...I know how hard that is...

In another illustration, Jennifer recognized that the experiences she had growing up working class has given her "street smarts" as a manager. This influenced her management style.

I think another thing that has helped me be successful in management is my 'street smarts'. A lot of people in health care...come from blue collar families...knowing a lot about the everyday environment I grew up in...There were things ...drugs, alcohol that were very accessible...you tend to learn a lot from the streets...I didn't have everything handed to me. I had to go through things the hard way...so when I have someone tell me they're in debt and can't make the payments, I understand what they're talking about...for a lot of things, I've been there....When you've been on that side of the fence, you tend to understand people a bit better...I have people tell me 'well you don't know what it's like.' and I want to tell them 'yeah, I do,' but I don't say that....

When treating people fairly is not valued by those in power

Some of the women's narratives provided examples of where those in power in their organizations do not hold the same values regarding how people in the workplace are treated. In some of those cases, the women did not challenge those in power, even though this value was very important to them. For example, Margaret was faced with a situation where she reported to a person whose management style did not reflect the values of respecting others that was so important to Margaret. However, because of her position and Margaret's background that respect

for those in power was important, Margaret didn't communicate with her superior the way that she would have liked.

...an interesting person...wanted the power, wanted to make all the decisions. But the majority of our meetings... she would just complain ...about other [managers], 'they don't know what the hell they're doing.' And there was part of me ...because of where I come from, my background, that I respect position. I would say certain things to her, but then I would let it go. I would step back because of her position. Not because of her, because of her position.

In other narratives, the importance of the women following the rules was emphasized; the women often equated following the rules with treating others fairly and recognized that they have internalized this expectation from their background. One example was shown in Wendy's narrative. It was very important to Wendy that she followed the rules and respected those in power even if she didn't always agree with them. In this way, she replicated the power relationships from the organization within her department as she expected this of her staff as well. She attributed this to her working class background where she was taught to obey the rules.

I don't like it when people don't follow the rules...That's what my parents modeled to me; if this is the rule, this is what we do. We don't break it; we don't try to go around it; the rules are there for a reason and we need to respect them...And I need to be supportive of this organization....Maybe...people in authority make decisions that I don't really care for, but I have to understand that they have a perspective that I don't have. They see things that I don't...sometimes I make decisions that my staff doesn't understand because there's a perspective that I have, that they'll never see...I have to think that works with people higher up...

Another example is seen in Ann's narrative. Ann's belief that she also had to follow the rules, even as a manager, is a good illustration of the internalization of the power of the dominant culture. This is a discussion about taking off during the holidays.

There was a discussion about taking off during the holidays...[nursing staff on the floors] are not allowed to take off between Thanksgiving and New Years, full weeks....one of the managers said ... 'if you [the directors] take off.. They're watching to see if it's a do as I do, do as I say situation. And that will be causing issues if you do take off and they're not allowed to.' And [another director, Ann's peer] .made the comment 'that is my title and I earned it... and if they want my position then they can work hard and...They can take off whenever they want to too'...I would never react like that... and it really turned me against that person...

Sometimes, the women recounted situations where they challenged the power relationships as they pertain to how people ought to be treated. In Olivia's narrative, we see a situation where she challenged the person in power, her boss. Olivia told of a conversation that she had with her superior regarding an employee who had been abused by her spouse. In this instance, she recounted how she confronted her superior's opinion with a strong reaction of her own.

[Boss's name] made a comment...an employee who was being abused...and he said 'I just can't imagine why women stay; what's wrong with them?' And I said to him, 'I was abused and I was married to my first husband for ten years and you don't know what it's like; and you don't know what it's like to leave.' (Silence). The verbal and emotional abuse can wear anybody down and I consider myself to be pretty strong and it wore me

down. So you don't know and watch what you say because you don't know who you're saying it to and you don't know what they've been through.

Jennifer also told of a time when she challenged the power relationships in the form of her boss. "I challenged the decision of the VP... She called me on the carpet and said 'who are you to challenge me?' ...she was actually threatening to terminate me. Well it turned out in the long run that I was accurate." In another situation, Jennifer's boss took credit for a project when Jennifer and others had actually completed the work. In this situation, Jennifer circumvented her boss and made sure that the administrator knew who had actually been involved in the project.

If someone else takes the recognition for something someone else does...that pisses me off (chuckles). A program I implemented...two of us worked really hard on that. And the VP who I reported to reported...that it was her project, her idea....Where she wasn't involved in it at all...An [administrator] told me that the VP told him nobody else had anything to do with that program...I informed him who those other people were.

Experiences of conflict relating to treating people fairly

Several of the women's narratives contained cases of internal conflict when their internalized value of treating people fairly and with respect conflicted with their own behavior.

In some instances, the internal conflict was caused by their own behaviors that went against the way they expected themselves to treat others. In her narrative, Amy recalled outbursts of temper that directly conflicted with the way she was raised to treat others. She isn't proud of these temper outbursts; they caused internal strife for her. She told of this example with a staff member who didn't do what she asked her to do.

She obviously wasn't going to do what I asked her to do, so I asked her to come in to the office; I closed the door and said 'next time I ask you to do something, I expect you to do

it. Don't ever, ever ignore what I say.' And I even remember banging my fist....I knew ...again I went way overboard...I characterize it as I was just ugly. That's just not me...It just wasn't something I feel good about afterwards....

In other narratives, the conflicts the women experienced were caused by duties they had to perform as a result of being a manager. For example, Olivia recalled several situations where she was conflicted because she had to terminate people or deliver news to them that they were losing their jobs. In this example, Olivia told of a time when operations were being downsized and employees were going to be let go.

I thought of them as my friends; they thought of me as their friend...two of them to this day will not talk to me because of that...yet I leave them alone when I see them because they feel that way and I'm not going to change that...it was a bad situation...they had to take it out on somebody so I took the brunt of that...And I don't think it's right...I feel bad for them but I also feel ...angry that they behaved that way...I hope someday they realize I was the middle person here....

Gracie also stated that she has a conflict at times between how she treats her people and the things that are required at times to run the department.

We can run the business; we can do what's needed, we can make money that my boss is expecting me to do. But you have demands of what's needed for the organization and you have the demands of the team. You are serving both of them and their needs may be different...There's always a conflict so you have to try to really balance it. I can make more money for the organization by cutting some of the team; that'll make them miserable and in the long run we'll make less money; so I think it's a balancing act and

that's the struggle... to be such good managers we give everything we can to our staff
...we still have to make sure the business is profitable...

The conflict between the expectations put upon them and their own expectations of how people ought to be treated can become very difficult to live with. In this emotional example, Ann experienced an internal conflict when she was in a higher level position and asked to do things that went against her integrity, the way she had been brought up to treat people.

There was a situation where there was downsizing of staff...I had to deal with asking certain people to leave...that was tough because I knew them personally, I knew their families... I take a lot of pride in knowing that I know a lot of people that I work with...they're not just commodities on an assembly line and that's what you're expected to do...For me to have to do that, it was very difficult for me...It was to a point where you become cold and I couldn't do that. It was eating at me. There were people that I worked with...perhaps because they didn't know some of the people personally, it didn't affect them. I couldn't do that...I would never treat anyone any differently than how I would want to be treated...

Ultimately Ann chose to step down because of the internal struggle that she had with these issues. She chose her integrity, her values over her career in a senior position with an organization.

And you pick your integrity or you pick your career, your position...When you're on your deathbed, do you think you're going to be thinking about what you did at your job?...Is that what you're going to be worried about? ...That's not what's going to be important to you when you're gonna have your last breath on earth...I felt I had to keep my integrity

and it cost me. But it's okay; it was well worth the cost to give up what I could have had for what I wanted to be...

Summary of theme: Treating people fairly

All of the women told of valuing treating people fairly. Some called it respect; others called it kindness or compassion; but they all not only valued it as a result of their working class backgrounds, but they valued it in the way they managed their employees.

Another general theme that came across in the narratives was that of the impact of gender roles and family expectations on the women in their lives as managers.

Gendered roles and family expectation

A third common theme across many of the narratives was that of the working class expectations put upon them as women. The actual expectations discussed varied from woman to woman, but the fact that there were expectations, did not.

Commonalities and differences

Family and the gender expectations that the participants learned growing up working class were very important to most of the women in the study. The women often talked about the times they spent together as a family growing up. Olivia talked about family time being when her “father would come home from work usually at 5 o'clock and that was our family time.” In another example, Katharine talks about doing things together with her family, “we had family projects.”

Some of the women related those values to the way they managed. Wendy for example, learned that family was important as was taking care of others. “I think...my family has tremendously impacted me, positively most of the time...They were people who didn't have

much in life...did with little; and we just learned to get by; but you cared a lot about each other.”

She compared her management style to that of mothering:

I listen to what they [the staff] say or try to use their input. I try to do the best for them and be supportive of them when they can't fend for themselves....I have my staff's best interest at heart...they know that I will be on their side, yet I am their manager. It's like being a mother, you have to be in your kids' corner, yet you are still their mother....

In her narrative, Ann emphasized the importance of home and family, not only in her family but in her priorities as a manager.

If I didn't call my mother every day, I'd be guilty about it...I'd have tremendous guilt. Or if she said 'I needed something, would you take me here?' and I told her no, I'd have guilt. I have some compulsive things that I expect; I would never leave the house with dirty dishes in the sink. That was my mother, you never did that; she'd always talk about that. My mother is very compulsive with that.

People think that their career is ...thing that makes them who they are...many times their family suffers. Many times the children are affected. ...What I leave behind here on earth is my child... I made that commitment and I will see it through and I want to give up where I can give my daughter what she needs...I look at that as I look on my responsibility as a parent, just like I would take on my responsibility at work. It's sad to see how people let their jobs rule them...that's not what makes you who you are. It's a part of what makes you who you are, but it's not the whole entire picture....

On the other hand, Jennifer had a very different approach to the importance of working class gendered expectations, particularly when it comes to marriage. Jennifer has been married three times; gendered expectations have made an impact upon her, but not in the same way it

impacted the other women in the study. Her parents' chaotic marriage, re-marriage situation has influenced her own life today.

I think one of the things I picked up from that is that I will never be in a position where I cannot take care of myself, the way my mother would be...I'm not going to be in a position where I need a man to take care of me...I can do my own thing and I don't have to ask someone for money to buy groceries...

Jennifer acknowledged that her chaotic childhood has impacted her personal life, perhaps in a negative way. However, she believed it had a positive influence on her career.

I think some of the family stuff there...I think it's impacting me in my personal life. I think personally, it's affected me. In professional career, I think it helped me to be successful; it helped me unsuccessful in my personal life...I'm very career oriented...if I'm with a guy who is not going to support that direction, well then he can just take a hike...[Men] want to be the dominant one. You know, we need their help. No I don't.

Gracie's parents' marriage was also chaotic and her father had traditional gender expectations for her and her siblings. But her mother was unhappy in the marriage and Gracie believed this had an impact on her. "She worked in sewing factories...was unhappily married for years but didn't have the means to do anything about it...I think my mom wanted me to be self sufficient; so I wouldn't be dependent upon a man."

Other women also talked about breaking away from some of the gender expectations that were established for them in their working class families. In her narrative, Margaret told of strong gender roles exhibited in her working class family. But she also told of how she broke away from that expectation.

I was raised in a family...my father's opinion was what was heard. If anybody else had one, you didn't speak it. Most of all, my mother never said much of anything. He made all the rules; he made all the decisions. I broke out of that... (laughs)....Submissive, no; I broke out of that mold.

Replicating or challenging gender expectations and importance of family

Many of the women talked about their responsibilities for their home and family.

Sometimes those expectations came through in the women replicating traditional gendered responsibilities today, even though they have the funds for to pay others to do those chores. A few of the women talked about gender expectations in terms of having a 'cleaning lady.' Even though Amy could afford to have a cleaning lady, she chose not to, "I'm doing it myself... my mother didn't have a cleaning lady." In her narrative, Lisa relayed the following anecdote:

[Her husband] made the comment to me about a cleaning lady 'cause friends of ours who are the same age as we are...they've got a cleaning lady that comes in I think once a week to clean their house. And I remember making the comment to [husband's name] 'why would you have a cleaning lady if you were completely capable of doing it yourself?... I mean I'm completely capable of getting up and dusting and vacuuming...but I remember making the comment.... I guess that's part of my guilt...I would feel guilty having someone come in and clean when I know I'm perfectly capable...

In at least one instance, when those traditional gender expectations were challenged, the consequence was guilt. For example, Gracie talked about having a cleaning lady, but she is almost embarrassed to admit it and actually downplayed it when it comes up in conversation.

When I'm with my team and we talk about cleaning or laundry or whatever, I'm embarrassed sometimes to say that I have a cleaning lady and I make sure I say 'she only

comes every other week.' I minimize it... almost like I'm ashamed that I have someone doing my cleaning...

Many of the women talked about early gender expectations and how they have learned to resolve them over time. Sometimes, the power of those gendered expectations was initially replicated and then later challenged. Wendy is a good example.

The lady of the house had certain expectations; it had to be spotlessly clean, the laundry had to be done, the food had to be prepared from scratch...well it doesn't happen when you're not there five days a week. So how do you resolve that...to resolve my own and my mother's conflicts with all of that to prevent her from coming and doing my laundry when I was at work... 'I folded your towels; I put them in the washer, I did a load...' It's my job, get out of my house...those kinds of things were difficult for me to learn...

My mother was a very good scratch cook...For me to be okay with putting potato salad from the market on the table in a nice dish as opposed to having made the potato salad sometimes caused me some conflict. But I had to get through that conflict but that was very much real....

Conversely there were examples in the narratives of the women replicating the patriarchy of their working class culture. For example, Ann talked about the way that women in general (as well as she, herself) internalize the expectations that they will be all things to all people; the expectations of women as caretaker – expectations of patriarchy.

I think as women we want to be super women, we want to be everything for everybody....

We're the last to take care of ourselves because at work we give everything we can and perhaps that's from the working class background too; well I saw my mother do the same thing – my mother worked two jobs. You know to give your all...at work, give your all at

home. But in the end you're giving for everybody else...Everyone else needs to be taken care of and you come last.

There were also some examples of the women challenging the patriarchal expectations of gender in their lives and relationships. Jennifer challenged the gendered expectations of the importance of marriage that she grew up with. She realized the impact that her mother's struggles had on her and vowed that she will not put herself into that situation.

...with my parents splitting up all the time, getting married and divorced three or four times to each other, my mother was always struggling. She was always 'how am I going to pay the bills; I can't help the children now...'...I don't ever want to be in that kind of position. ...I could be independent and it's not going to alter the lifestyle I've established for my daughter. So I think that has impacted me personally, all the divorces and stuff; I'm not going to get into that boat. I don't want to have to rely on anybody....

Gracie challenged the expectation of the dominant culture that work comes before all else. Her own values of recognizing the importance of family carried through to the way she managed her staff. "When I have staff that have family issues, I make it known that family is priority. I expect one hundred percent when they're at work; but if there's a family issue, you need to be with your family."

Experiences of conflict relating to gender roles and family

Some of the women had conflicts relating to the gendered expectations of their backgrounds and the realities of their managerial role and their lives that resulted from being a manager. Wendy had a serious internal conflict when she was in a position that was taking her away from her family and impacting the expectations she had of herself as a working class woman.

I had a family that I really felt I was shortchanging and that was very difficult for me because my working class background told me that as a mother I had dinner to fix; I had children to spend time with; I had a house to clean; I had laundry to do. And I have to do that to be a good mom...I resigned that position because I couldn't deal with it anymore....

Despite her parents' unhappy marriage and her sometimes loud family life, Gracie values her family today. When she was in a higher level position within the health organization, she didn't feel as if she was spending enough time with her son, so she stepped down after five years to a manager role that allows her to balance her work with her family life.

[I] stayed there about five years; it was a very demanding job. I have a son who at that time was eight and I don't feel like I was ever really there for him... If you can't do the job and still have a personal life, it's probably not the job for you....I lost sight of what was important. You can't get those years back....

Summary of theme: Gender roles and family

The women in the narratives learned over time to accept or challenge the working class gender expectations that were so much a part of their backgrounds and values. Each chose to deal with them in her own way.

A fourth common theme heard throughout the narratives was that of a conflict with the values and behaviors that were expected of them as a manager.

Expectations of a manager

Many of the women expressed that they had had some kind of conflict relating to expected values, behaviors, etc. that came along with their managerial roles. These expectations were at times in direct conflict with the values and expectations established for them in their

working class backgrounds. These expectations set up conflicts over behaviors, common sense and at times, lifestyle.

Commonalities and differences

One of the values often learned in a working class home is that of common sense. Several of the women discussed their need for the decisions they are involved in to make sense, to be practical and logical to them. For instance, Katharine, Jennifer and Lisa mentioned the issue of common sense, specifically as it related to their roles as managers. In her narrative, Katharine talked about the importance of common sense (grey matter) not only in her upbringing, but in her professional life today.

It was my father who really used the term... He used it very often... you have the common sense, now use it. He definitely knew book smart, you learn what you learn in school but also your mom and I are going to teach you what's important in life. That's really where he got back to common sense... These are important things in life; things that you need to keep with you and stand by....And today that means so much to me; I get very frustrated within my professional career when people don't think.I think it gets back to my upbringing...the reinforcement of use your brain; use your grey stuff....common sense is important.....

I've said it to my staff and on the converse, I've been frustrated with a peer or another manager or somebody who just didn't think about something... or who had come to a conclusion without thinking it through....

Lisa stressed the importance of common sense in the way she approached her management job, making a clear distinction between practicality in a manager from a working class background and the managerial approach of someone from a privileged one:

I think that mentality of the whole common sense thing comes from being that working class person. I think when you're raised by people like that, they're more practical; it seems like things are more logical. They take time to think through things and they taught me to do that...And I think that people who come from a more privileged background aren't exposed to some of those day to day problems or issues that maybe a working class person is so they don't necessarily develop that kind of innate ability to reason through something or use their common sense to come to a conclusion about something....

I don't like to immediately react to something. I feel like I need to think through it. Even when somebody calls me and says '[Lisa] I have this problem, what do you think?', often times I'll say to them 'well let me think about it...' Is that something because you were raised that way, do you think things through more logically? Do you take more time to make a decision because you know there's a bigger impact to it? Whereas someone from more of a privileged background makes the decision that immediately comes to mind, not thinking of the ramifications because maybe the ramifications aren't that big of a deal to them.

Jennifer went a step further in her narrative, stating it appeared to her that at times decisions made by those in higher positions of authority made no sense.

I do think that you need to have common sense. You know sometimes decisions are common sense decisions; and the book smarts doesn't always do it. You can have the book smarts but if you don't know how to act it out or work it out and put some common sense to it, the book smarts doesn't necessarily work for people. ...people with all the highest degrees and gone through school and never really worked and they're definitely book smart and they can tell you a lot from the book but then they can't interact with

people...If you would have included us or participated in some group evaluation instead of making a decision by a select group of people... yeah to me, that's just common sense; involve the users.

A few of the women discussed the expectations upon them as managers in terms of behavior. For example, Jennifer acknowledged that "when you get into a certain position, there's a certain way that you're expected to act, to behave." However, she laughed and continued, "I haven't always fitted that mold."

In a striking example, Olivia's narrative revealed an occasion when she was reprimanded for not acting in the way that was expected of a manager. In this particular situation, she was reprimanded in a way for being honest and upfront in her approach.

Sometimes I would divulge too much, not knowing that what I was doing was wrong or that I shouldn't have said that. ... I had to learn what I could or couldn't say...One time [boss's name] kicked me under the table, very hard. And that's when I learned that sometimes you just don't say anything at all. I probably still have a little bit of trouble with that....

Still other women recalled examples where they were put into situations, especially early in their management careers where they were expected to know how to handle something. They had no one to mentor them and often didn't feel comfortable asking for help. In her narrative, Olivia told of this experience when she was new to management and her superior just assumed she knew what to do in this situation.

People thought that just because you were a manager, that you knew how to do everything. I can remember the first time I had to do budgets...I never did a budget...They just gave you the papers and a list of instructions...I remember sitting down and trying to

do them...when I gave them to her [boss]...her sitting at her desk going ‘humph, oh my god’ and complaining because I guess they were just horrific...and I felt terrible, but I didn’t know what I was doing...she didn’t say ‘do you need help with these,’ she just assumed that I knew...

Ann had a similar experience; in this example, she told of a situation where, as a new manager, she had to deal with an argument between two physicians.

We had two physicians who were arguing... and here I was, this person that was pretty young and [said] ‘this is getting out of hand; you’re too loud; you need to stop this.’ ...I could not call anyone. I didn’t feel comfortable to call anyone because I felt like I was just kind of left out there working alone and really didn’t feel very supported. I wanted to prove myself and if I would have called someone and asked for help, perhaps...they would have looked at me as if I didn’t know what I was doing. So I decided I was going to resolve it myself.

Replicating or challenging expected manager behavior

Many of the women internalized the expectations of them as managers established by the powerful in the organization in which they work. In other cases, they may have internalized and are sustaining or replicating the hegemonic beliefs put on the working class – beliefs such as doing what is expected of you and obeying the rules.

One of Ann’s early experiences in management showed that she had internalized and replicated the expectations put on her by her background; the expectations that you do what it is that you are asked to do.

I didn’t know if this was really what management is all about (chuckles), but I knew that I was asked to do it and I just, I did it. And when I look back, there were probably several

times when I went home at night and thought, 'why am I doing this?' But this was my upbringing; you're asked to do something, you take it on, you accept it and you make the best of it.

In Wendy's narrative, she revealed that she obeys the rules; she "walks the chalk line." One of the rules that she internalized was that she does what is expected of her when it comes to the behaviors of a manager. This is especially true when she is expected to be at certain events as a result of her role in the workplace.

I always had a saying that when I took this job, that there are times when you have to hobnob with the rich and famous. And you have to behave in a way that's acceptable to them. And that's different from what I do at home or with my parents. My behavior is different... You have to be nice and... There's a very different expectation... there's a different performance that you do. I don't know why, you just do. It's a part of what you have to do. I go to the functions; I'd rather go home, but sometimes you have to go where you have to go. You're expected and that's where you are....

Alternatively, Amy's narrative revealed the impact of power relations on her management style. Although she would prefer a more collaborative management style, she believed she was forced to be a micromanager due to the expectations placed upon her by her organization.

I think that [her management style] changes (sighs) from time to time... and I don't know that I really like that about me, but I think I'm really more of a micromanager than I'm really comfortable being and I'd really like to be and I think that's because what I have to be right now, in order to succeed, to meet expectations. But that's not my normal style, the style I like to use. My most comfortable... is one of collaboration, discussion, getting

and receiving, getting and giving input into decisions. Giving the benefit of the doubt, giving people opportunities to make mistakes...and I don't think...in an environment... where that is tolerable for the most part....

In another example of conforming to the expectations of someone in a manager role, Gracie internalized the perception of the dominant culture that people who come from her regional area of the Mid-Atlantic and speak with a regional accent sound stupid. She made a conscious effort not to do so.

You do sort of feel like you're denying the culture of your home....At times I make a real effort not to use [the local dialect of the area] 'cause I think you sound stupid. So I try real hard not to use any [local dialect] remarks...You're still who you grew up and that's still in you even though you made some efforts to improve, not improve 'cause it's not an improvement, to modify your behavior...your speech, your gestures, your appearance....

Some of the women however challenged the expectations put on them by the powerful in the dominant culture and the powerful within the organization.

Jennifer challenged the expectations placed on her as a manager. One area in particular was in her personal life and her lifestyle. She recognized that her decision to live a completely different lifestyle outside of work may have a negative impact on her career.

I think too, who you're married to influences your job. It influences what level you get to. Because if they don't accept your husband, they don't accept you into higher level positions at times because you can't mingle...who you should be married to and what you two should be doing together as a couple. All of my husbands had longer hair than I do and ride motorcycles. Doesn't quite fit the senior management style....

She acknowledged that her background and her approach to things as learned in her class background were not always appreciated by those in power, "...my struggles, which might be because of some of my street life showing hasn't given me all that finesse that maybe other people have had; you have to have a certain style to get into those upper level positions."

In another example, Olivia initially tried very hard to meet the expectations put upon her as a manager, internalizing the expectation of the organization that she work long hours. But when her family life began to suffer, she began to challenge that expectation of those in power in the organization. As a result, she decided that she will never again accept that premise of working long hours to the detriment of her family.

I'm not obsessed about being here until 8 or 9 o'clock every night and working weekends; I was like that when I started...I'd be here until 7:30 at night; I'd be here Friday nights until 8 o'clock. I'd come in on Saturdays and Sundays to work...I don't want to work 65, 70 hours per week...I don't need to be that person...I think a lot of that was it was a new role for me, there were a lot of high expectations for me...and I just wasn't going to let anybody down...It [her family life] was pretty bad...I was contemplating a divorce, my son was getting involved in drugs; I had a falling out with my brother over my son...I don't need sixty, seventy hour work weeks...never [again].

Several of the women in the study chose to step down from a higher position (Ann, Wendy and Gracie) or declined to accept a higher position in the organization when it was offered. In Katharine's narrative, she told of an opportunity she had to move into a senior position at an organization where she worked. She turned down the position at that time, challenging the hegemonic belief that success is measured by your job title and the power that

you have. As a result, her decision was met by surprise and disdain from the senior level administrators who offered her the position.

There was no way I was prepared to go into the role and I knew it. So I declined the position; it was met with a reaction that I was quite surprised by from the [administration] at the time...it was almost like I am in a book somewhere because I refused to do something that this [administration] thought I was ready to do...I made the absolute right decision. I am a better person today for that decision that I made...

Experiences of conflict relating to expected manager behavior

A number of the women experienced a conflict between their working class values and the expectations that were put upon them as a manager. At times these conflicts were external. In her narrative, Jennifer recognized that the way she learned to behave as a result of her working class background have at times conflicted with the expectations put on her as a manager – the expectations of those in more powerful positions in the organization.

You know when you work with [administration] or when you report to a VP, you know when you report to that person, you're expected to act in a certain way. Well I don't always act the way they would like me to act and then you sort of get labeled as a troublemaker or you're the squeaky wheel sometimes. I think that sometimes the people who are in those positions because they've had I would say a more sheltered life, they haven't seen as many different sides of the fence. They don't get it ...You're expected to behave and act a certain way when you're told something and you're thinking 'no that's not how I want to respond.' And sometimes I don't; I respond the way I want to respond. I'll call people to the carpet on it; people don't like that. I have gone up the hill (chuckles) and I've gone down....

Most of the conflicts that occurred as a result of the expectations placed upon them as managers were internal conflicts. For three of the women, these internal conflicts resulted in them stepping down from a higher position because the internal conflict became too great. Wendy is a good example. In a previous management position, she had a tremendous struggle with the behaviors expected of her as a manager. This struggle almost cost her marriage and her family; ultimately she stepped down from that position, even though she did not have another position on the horizon at that time.

When I was Director...I worked for a ...company and they were very in tune with the bottom line. And they had some practicesthat I couldn't agree with. You had to base your staffing on...you reviewed it retrospectively....you just can't call people to come to work at 2 in the morning...and I did try to please. I worked very difficult...stressed over trying to make them happy as to what needed to be done until the expectation got to where I thought it was ridiculous and I could not live with myself...

My...class background told me that you work an eight hour day, you get paid for eight hours and you go home and you're done....management job was 24/7; that meant I got paid for eight hours and I worked 'til the work was finished and then I went home and the phone was ringing almost immediately with questions and issues. I had a family that I really felt I was shortchanging...My family couldn't deal with it; in fact my husband gave me an ultimatum: it's either the job or us; pick one. And I certainly didn't want to give up my family. So I gave up the job...it was a good decision... the conflict really did get overwhelming.

In her narrative, Gracie also talked about the conflict she had when she was in a Department Director position; a conflict between her values regarding the kind of manager she

wanted to be and the expectations put on her. This conflict ultimately led to her stepping down from that position.

I remember my dad talking about 'he'd [her dad's boss] pull up in his big Cadillac, get out on the job site, he'd criticize the work we're doing, he'd go off and we'd be out in the cold' and so those kinds of things, hearing them... I thought I never want to be portrayed like that. So I always feel like I have to be there for my crew....And I think that's why people who have really good intentions, after awhile it starts to take away from their personal life and it's hard to still be that person and still get all of the paper pushing and stuff done that we know we have to do in management. I don't want to get back into a job like that again where you have to be everything to everyone. At some point, there just has to be a happy medium.

In her story, Ann also talked freely about when she was in a senior level position and struggled with the expectations put on her by those in power in the organization and the internal conflict that resulted in her stepping down from that role.

...you have to decide if you want to be controlled and what is going to be the cost you pay for that. And if you are in the power, do you want to force that power below in a lower level and do things that you know in your heart that you wouldn't have done...And that's where you have to decide, is it worth the power or is it worth keeping your integrity.

For a fourth woman, the desire to avoid an internal conflict resulted in her not taking a senior level position within an organization. In talking about the senior position that she turned down, Katharine talked about the conflict between the expectations put upon someone in a manager role, especially a senior manager role and her own expectations and values.

I have seen so many people...going into a position only for it not to work out...they made a decision that was not right for them... I've seen so many people going into those roles being one person and then in a matter of a year, they're somebody different because they've changed. And they've given up those values or the fight...they come in fresh and then boy, they're changed. Yeah I had the opportunity to make a lot of money, to be part of the inner circle... but it just wasn't for me. And I can tell you today, I don't know if it's still right for me... I think because of the meshing, again the sacrifices that I would need to make on my personal side. I think there would be certain of my values that would be challenged and that would be a struggle. ...I'm just not willing to do it; I wasn't willing to do it...years ago and I'm not willing to do it today.

Other women talked about different types of internal conflicts resulting from the expectations placed upon them as a manager. Amy's narrative revealed an internal struggle she had when she went from being president of the nurse's union to a manager.

I thought what's that gonna look like just 'cause you were in the union, and now you're in management and I don't really know how I came to terms with that....I know it ran through my mind. I did struggle with that a bit, I remember thinking 'what's everybody gonna think?' You know, how are they gonna react to this...How could you be president of the union and then all of a sudden or the next thing you do is you're the manager of the unit; how can you do that? I think that doesn't look good maybe...that's where my concern was in the lack of comfort with the decision.

Olivia related a conflict she had when she was new to management and put into a situation where she didn't feel comfortable that she knew what she was doing.

One (laughs) time when we were having a meeting and it was I and [several members of the senior leadership]... [boss's name] had done the whole proposal and she couldn't make the meeting and asked me to go; well I felt like an idiot. I didn't know what I was doing...and I really felt inferior, I really did...I handed these papers out... they all read them and said 'well this looks good' and I thought 'well thank god because I don't know what the hell I'm talking about' (laughs)... you know she just sent me and just expected that I would be okay...so it was like I was thrown in and people took for granted...you have to be eased into those things...

Ann spoke of a conflict she had when she saw how other managers' behaviors don't meet with her expectations of how a manager should behave or the values they should have.

It's an internal struggle because it's very frustrating; it's hard to understand how they don't want to be helping their staff and be actively involved with their staff 'cause I feel that goes a long way. ...I hear a lot of people say that people don't have a good work ethic because they don't come to work, they call in. I've even heard people saying about managers and directors, 'well they're calling in sick, they come in whenever they want. And here we are, we're busy and they stroll in whenever they feel like it.' And I've also heard managers and directors say 'well that's why I have that title' or 'I can do that now.' And that just goes against my grain.

Summary of theme: expectations of a manager

Many of the women talked about various times in their management careers when the values and expectations of themselves and others conflicted with their role as a manager. These conflicts surrounded work ethic, respect and treatment of others, gender and family role expectations and expectations set forth for them as managers. The discussion and quotes on the

previous pages of this chapter show some of their thoughts relating to those conflicts. The women often spoke of these conflicts in specific terms. Here, Wendy speaks in more general terms about the fact that there are conflicts and you just learn how you are going to resolve them.

The conflict between the working class values, lifestyle, that kind of thing and the conflict, contrast with the ...management lifestyle...They're different and that conflict and how you resolve that and how it impacts your life....your decisions, how it gives you conflict internally; 'cause you have one set of values that you grew up with and maybe another set of values that you have to use at work. So I see that conflict; sometimes it's easy to deal with and at other times, it's more difficult...

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the narratives told by the nine women in the study. Each of the narratives stands separately, allowing for the women to share their individual voice, their own story. There were some common themes across the narratives: the importance and impact of a strong work ethic on the women's managerial roles, the significance of the value of treating others with fairness and respect, the meaning of gendered expectations on their lives and careers, and the results of collisions between their own values and the expectations put upon them by those in power due to their role as a manager in the organization.

“Stories about one's nation, social class, gender...are not simply stories, but are narratives which have real consequences for the fates of individuals...” (Richardson, 1990, p. 128).

Allowing the individual stories to stand alone, with no collective story, reinforces the individuality and uniqueness of each participant. However, recognizing the similarities between the narratives allows us to recognize the conflicts and the impact of patriarchy and power upon their lives. Bloom (2002) writes,

... if our stories are ideologically grounded in patriarchal perceptions of what it means to live a life, and if we do not attempt to subvert the master narratives by bringing to the surface the complex and diverse realities of people's feelings and experiences, we perpetuate damaging humanistic/patriarchal norms.... (p. 305).

All of the women in the study believed that their working class background influenced the way they manage today. Gracie sums it up this way,

I think I empathize more with the employees because they're the ones that do the job. My background shows me that. I think people who come from an upper class and haven't ever struggled don't appreciate the fact that it is the folks below them in the factories and wherever they work and are making the money and if they all walked out today, nothing would get done...I'm going to be a manager that empathizes and is there for the team. But if you're going to stay in that management position, you still have to do the job and still have to be profitable and so it's a tough walk in the middle.

In the next chapter, I provide an analysis of these findings in relation to the literature, the significance of the study and implications for adult education practice.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

My intent in this study was to use qualitative research techniques, specifically narrative analysis to explore with a critical lens the stories of working class women who become managers in a health care organization. My hope was that they would share with me their experiences and struggles, as well as their frustrations and feelings so that we would gain a better understanding of the role their working class origins played in their transition to managers and their current management style. As they talked and I listened, their experiences and examples became their narratives, taking their words and becoming their stories. Each woman's narrative took on her personality, merely organized by me to ease the reader's understanding of her experience - a negotiation between the participant and me in its content, flow and title. The narratives are presented in their entirety in Chapter Four, and a discussion of the narratives is presented in Chapter Five.

It has become common in the United States to think of ourselves as a relatively class-less society in the sense that anyone who comes from a less than privileged background can "make it" based on his or her own merits. We are fascinated by people who have come from poverty or working class backgrounds and then become wealthy and famous; people such as Oprah Winfrey. And yet, in this meritocracy, with rewards given to those who earn them (Fahy, 2009), those who have earned the right to privileges are expected to act in ways that indicate they are privileged; in effect to negate their background.

In the same way, women who are in professional or management/leadership positions often find themselves in an untenable position. Hindered by gender stereotypes regarding proper roles for women, questions concerning their competence in a leadership role and persistent

gender inequality, many women in management may wonder how much progress has really been achieved since the advent of feminism (Larsen, 2009).

Women who come from a working class background and become managers face these expectations; expectations placed upon them by their class and their gender – as well as expectations placed upon them by the powerful in the organizations within which they work. In their narratives, the women in my study showed how they have dealt with these expectations over time and how they are addressing them today. Some of the women have acquiesced to the expectations, internalizing them, owning them and in some cases replicating them in their own personal and professional lives. Others have fought against the expectations for a good part of their lives, even in childhood and continue to fight against them to this day. In this chapter, I endeavor to make sense of how these narratives add to the literature on working class women in management. First, I review my discussion of the common themes arising from the narratives. Secondly, I discuss the analysis of the narratives in relationship to the critical feminist theoretical framework serving as the foundation for my study; and then I compare the analysis to the literature found in Chapter Two. As part of the analysis, I utilize some quotes from the narratives where appropriate to emphasize the connection between them and the literature. The implications of this study for adult education and human resource development, specifically management education are discussed next, followed by my suggestions for future research in this area. Finally, I conclude this chapter and this dissertation with my personal reflections on the study and the process.

Discussion of the Findings

When I began to recruit participants for my study, I did not expect the enthusiasm I encountered. There were two women (Katharine and Ann) who were eager to be the “first”

women interviewed. Both of them suggested other women who they either knew or suspected came from working class backgrounds. Every woman I asked, said yes; not just a hesitant yes, but an enthusiastic “absolutely, yes” and were eager to get started. Word spread throughout the organization what I was doing and there came a point where I had to tell some women, who actually came to me asking about my study, that I just could not include them in it due to time constraints. This was completely unexpected.

Throughout the interviews, the development of the narratives and the overall discussion of the findings at the group “celebration” (their words), some of the participants were more introspective and reflective than others. All of the women, however, commented as to the impact of this study upon them, in the sense that they thought about their origins differently and reflected upon the impact their working class background had upon not only upon their personal lives today, but also upon the way that they manage.

The first research question posed in Chapter One asked about the experiences that working class women have when they become managers. Although all of the women answered that question in their narratives, as expected, all of the women’s experiences were different. Their transition to the manager role and their continuing experiences as a manager were and continue to be influenced by what is happening in their personal lives, their daily interactions and life at the workplace, and the culture of the organization; as well as by the expectations established for them by their working class families and those in power within the institutions within which they work.

The second research question asked about the women’s experiences of conflict or ambivalence relating to gender/class identity as they became managers. Every one of the women’s narratives revealed a conflict of some sort in their journeys from “working class little

girl” as Lisa said, to a manager today. What was different was the precipitating event(s) that led to the conflict(s) and how the woman resolved it; or in some cases continued to attempt to resolve it. Some of the women struggled with the values of those in power in the organization and the impact that had upon their own integrity, value system, and management style and even upon the employees they manage. Three of the women have stepped down from a higher level position in an organization, due in part to that struggle. Other women have struggled or continue to struggle with the gender expectations put upon them by their working class background and internalized (at least in part) by themselves; gender expectations that are unrealistic to live up to when compared to the reality of time constraints and work related expectations of their own superiors or the work culture. Those gender expectations and the internal/external struggles the women encountered as a result led a few women to either relinquish higher level positions or refuse to take them in the first place. In some cases, the women tried to meet the expectations of the organization to the detriment of their family life, realizing that their family life and personal well being were more important and made conscious decisions not to do that anymore. Many of the women also struggled with the expectations that the organization has of them as a manager; expectations in terms of behavior for example. Some of the women made a decision to meet those expectations, doing things they were told to do and meeting the expectations set out for them.

The third research question raised in Chapter One addressed the impact of social/political forces, including power differentials upon the women in their transition to or experiences of being a manager. The experiences detailed within the narratives themselves in Chapter Four and the presentation of the commonalities and differences within the narratives as presented in Chapter Five reveal that social and political forces of their working class background and the

power differentials realized within that background – as well as within the organizations in which they worked—had tremendous impacts upon the women in the study. In some cases, the social forces dictated the professions they chose; in all cases the hegemony of “working hard so you will succeed” dominates their work ethic, even if how they define “working hard” is different among the women themselves. All of the women confronted power differentials in their managerial roles; some of the women internalized the expectations placed upon them by those in power; others found themselves struggling against them when those expectations clashed with their own values; and still others found themselves defying those expectations in an attempt to reconcile their own expected standards of behavior.

As the women told the stories of their backgrounds and their experiences as a manager, some commonalities and differences became apparent as discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Strong values from their working class backgrounds such as work ethic, treating people fairly and with respect and gendered expectations were apparent in every woman’s narrative, but their definitions of these and how these values impacted them varied considerably among the women. All of the women had some sort of internal or external struggle relating to at least one of these commonalities, but the nature of the struggle and the resolution to it varied, as would be expected. The women also talked about the expectations placed upon them as a manager in their organization; expectations placed upon them by people in positions of power in the organization and the struggles that they had with those situations. Again, the nature of those struggles and the way the women resolved them varied by their personalities and personal situations, but the fact that they had struggles was consistently voiced.

I turn now to the theoretical framework that was the foundation for the study and reflect upon the analysis of the narratives in light of critical feminist theory.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Feminism

This study is grounded upon the foundation of critical feminist theory. While critical theory deals with such aspects of injustice such as oppression of the majority by a group of powerful elite, as well as hegemony and power, it does not address the impact upon this oppression of other socially constructed aspects of marginality such as gender and class. Critical feminism views social inequality within a culture while taking into account those differences affecting that marginality, issues such as gender and class, in addition to others such as sexual orientation and race. In this study, my primary focus was on the socially constructed identities the women developed relating to gender and class.

The narratives of the women clearly showed the impact of hegemony and power upon their experiences, their choices, their decisions and upon the internal and external conflicts they face(d) in their managerial roles. Did gender and class play a role in this impact? What role, if any, did their gender and/or their class play in the conflicts they have faced as a result of their transition from working class little girls to managers in a health care organization?

Hegemony

In critical theory, the notion of hegemony is used to explain how people internalize the beliefs and values of those in power and come to consider those values and beliefs as true, right and in their best interest. Using the lens of critical feminist theory, if we add the aspect of gender to hegemony, we would look at these beliefs and values as coming from a patriarchal society and reflect on those hegemonic beliefs and values, taking into consideration the interests of women.

I consider two common themes from the narratives in the light of hegemony: gendered expectations and expected behaviors of a manager.

Gendered expectations

Traditionally, critical theory has focused on the oppression of male laborers; however a long-established gendered division of labor has been assumed and indeed arguably has been needed for the proficient operation of capitalism. Indeed, “the sexual division of labor is at the structural and ideological base of patriarchy and capitalism” (Eisenstein, 1990, cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 316). Hegemony occurs as a result of people internalizing and supporting beliefs that will hurt them; one of the primary places that a sexual division of labor is learned, and thus the hegemony of patriarchy is taught, is the nuclear family.

Many of the women in the study talked about gender expectations as being learned at home and some recognized that they had internalized those gender expectations. A good example is Wendy. She even indicated in her narrative that her working class background told her, “as a mother I had dinner to fix; I had children to spend time with; I had a house to clean; I had laundry to do. And I have to do that to be a good mom.”

Other women also talked about the traditional gender expectations they grew up with and were part of their families of origin. Some have adapted those gender expectations to meet their current needs, but in Gracie’s case, she doesn’t like to talk about that, especially her use of a cleaning lady. Other women, notably Lisa and Amy indicated that they didn’t have cleaning ladies, that they didn’t see the need for them if she was perfectly capable of doing her own cleaning (Lisa) or because her mother didn’t have a cleaning lady (Amy). Still another woman, Jennifer indicated that she would love to have a cleaning lady, but her husband wouldn’t allow it – another example of how she would like to defy the patriarchal expectations of her background, but is this time limited by the patriarchy that exists in her marriage.

These gendered expectations that have been internalized and replicated or challenged are examples of hegemonic thoughts and beliefs that impact the women's personal lives. These hegemonic values learned at home and reinforcing patriarchy also influenced their manager roles and management style. Some of the women related their management style to the importance of family. In Wendy's narrative for example, not only did she talk about the internalization of these beliefs, but she also indicated that when the struggle between those gender and class values and the expectations of her manager role became too intense, she chose the values she had internalized and quit her job. Gracie and Ann also both stepped down from higher level (and ostensibly higher paying) positions, in part due to the impact of their jobs on their families and the struggle this created internally for them. Similarly, Katharine chose not to take a senior level position for some of those same reasons. Clearly, the hegemony of gendered expectations impacted these women both personally and in their professional, managerial roles.

Expectations of a manager

Having an understanding of hegemony and its sexist (as well as racist, homophobic, etc.) implications can make it easier to understand how the beliefs and values of patriarchy can thrive. Hegemonic behavior or beliefs are not necessarily overt; nor do they have to be overt to be effective. Just as words and behaviors are silently applauded or reproached by the nonverbal expressions received from others on a daily basis, the actions and expressions of hegemony are also praised or censured by others, often without one realizing it.

A person's career or chosen job role can become an expression of hegemony, especially when used to rationalize added responsibilities and duties exceeding her abilities or energy or are potentially damaging to her personal relationships or health. These acts serve to perpetuate hegemony, reinforcing patriarchy when seen in predominantly female professions (Brookfield,

2005). Seven of the nine women in my study were managers in either inpatient or outpatient areas of the health system; arguably coming up through the ranks of predominantly female departments. An eighth woman in my study was a manager in a staff position, again in a department within the health system that is predominantly female.

All of the women in the study talked about expectations placed upon them as a manager; at times those expectations clashed with their own values and beliefs they had internalized as working class women. Jennifer is a good example. In her narrative she talked about some of the behaviors she exhibited as a teenager and some of the aspects of her personal life currently that do not quite fit with the expectations of a manager in her organization: "...Who you should be married to and what you two should be doing together as a couple. All of my husbands had longer hair than I do and ride motorcycles. Doesn't quite fit the senior management style." Olivia's story of being kicked under the table by her boss for being too honest was another poignant example of what happened to the women when their behaviors or words were chastened for not being up to expectations.

Some of the women provided examples of situations early in their management career when they felt unprepared for their role, or the behaviors expected of them. Both Ann and Olivia told of experiences where they were put into situations exceeding their abilities at the time; in both cases however, they did what was expected of them, because that was what they were supposed to do.

Other women also told of situations where they did what they were supposed to do as a manager, showing that they had internalized the hegemony, the expectations placed upon them as a manager. Margaret's example of not confronting her superiors when they were clearly in the wrong; Gracie balancing the needs of her employees with the need of the organization; Wendy

obeying the rules, because that is what you're supposed to do; and Amy following the directives of her superior even though it went against her management style are all examples of the internalization of the hegemony instilled in them as managers. Interestingly, all of these women are managers in patient care, predominantly female areas.

Other thoughts on hegemony

Because hegemony is learned throughout our lives, starting with our families of origin, we are often unaware of its existence in our thoughts, words and behaviors. The values of the dominant culture were reinforced by the working class environments in which these women grew up, serving to entrench the hegemony “in a system of practices – behaviors and actions that people learn to live out on a daily basis within personal relationships, institutions, work and community...” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 94). The women in the study talked about the conflicts and struggles they had when their working class values and expectations were at odds with behaviors expected of them as managers. When the women talked about these conflicts, they saw them the struggles as being about them – their lack of knowledge or their inability to meet expectations. They did not see the conflicts arising from the expectations being inappropriate. This is a good example of the hegemonic internalization of the beliefs of the dominant culture.

Another example of the effect of hegemony occurred in my initial interviews with the women. It was very difficult for the women in the first round of interviews to think critically about the experiences in their lives and manager role. For the most part, they didn't bring up experiences that showed a conflict with any values or anyone in the organization, especially anyone in a position of power or authority. Overall, the initial interviews with the women focused on their career progression and whitewashed experiences and lives. I followed up those first interviews with pointed questions to elicit examples and situations they may have

encountered. These questions were provided to them ahead of time to allow them to remember situations from their past. Most of the questions were individualized for each woman, based upon things she had said in the first interview. Some of the questions were the same for all of the women however, and I also provided them with four quotes to review – quotes from the first three chapters of this dissertation relating to power and critical feminist theory. By the end of each second interview (all of which were significantly longer than the first one), the women had given me examples of situations from her own life where hegemony had impacted her. As a result of the reading of the quotes and the subsequent discussion in the second interview, some of the women came to a realization that power and the expectations of the dominant culture did have an impact on them without them realizing it. “I never thought about that before” and “yeah, yeah, you make a good point” and “how weird is that” were some of the comments they made in these “aha” moments when they came to realize just how their values and their internalized expectations of the way the world was supposed to work had impacted them. Others did not agree with the opinions of those who had written the quotes and could not identify any times that their class identity, values or internalized classed expectations had impacted their decisions, choices or behaviors. However, as the women told the stories of their experiences, it became apparent that indeed they had; examples can be found in their narratives in Chapter Four and in the discussion of the narratives in Chapter Five.

Another aspect of critical feminist theory that played an important role in the analysis of the women’s narratives is that of power. To look at the impact of power relationships upon the women’s experiences as a manager, I look at power specifically as it is revealed by the narratives of the women in this study.

Power

Power is present in all relationships and all situations; its influence cannot be erased (Foucault, 1980). As people mature, they learn to recognize power in various relationships, the roles that power plays in their lives and ways it is used and even abused in daily experiences (Brookfield, 2005); power is revealed in situations “through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen...” (Foucault, 1980, p. 154).

According to Barbara Townley (1993) in her article on Foucault’s relevance for Human Resource Management practices, power itself becomes obvious when it is exercised within relationships and through “practices, techniques and procedures” (p. 520) that become apparent in a manager/employee relationship. It is no surprise then that the role of power has influenced the women in this study; not only influenced their lives as working class women but also as managers within a bureaucratic and sometimes patriarchal organization. I turn now to an analysis of the role of power in two of the common themes: treating other fairly and expected behaviors of a manager.

Treating others fairly

Critical feminists often criticize traditional critical theorists for not recognizing the impact of the male dominated nuclear family as a source of the internalization of power differentials. Traditionally in critical theory, power has been viewed in terms of bureaucracies, but critical feminists believe that more attention should be paid to patriarchal power evidenced within families, so that there is recognition of the “actions coordinated by normatively secured consensus in the male-headed nuclear family are actions regulated by power” (Fraser, 1995 cited in Brookfield, 2005), p. 318).

It is no surprise then when discussing the aspect of power, we turn first to the women in this study who acknowledged that they learned their values of respect for others and treating them fairly from their parents. Sometimes they saw that behavior modeled. Margaret talked in her narrative about the influence of her mother on the way she has learned to treat others, and upon her managerial style. She revealed that her father was very patriarchal and was the loud one in the family; his voice was the one that was heard – a traditional approach to the power relationships in her working class family. But Margaret acknowledged that it was truly her mother who was the power in the family and in her own quiet way taught Margaret how to deal with others. She says, “We’ve all followed my mother’s path, who’s very kind, who thinks about people...it was really mother [who was the leader]...Without saying anything; just by doing.” In Margaret’s case then, her observance of a very traditional and some would say sexist family situation led her to value the behavior of her mother, who she saw as the real power in the family. This has affected the way she manages her staff. She said that it is important to her that she treats her staff with respect and “appreciate them for the individuals that you are.” These values of respect and treatment of others have at times caused her a conflict with others’ behaviors, especially when power relationships have been involved, such as the incidents she had with the games played those in a higher level in the organization. Interestingly, in Margaret’s case even though she stated that she broke out of the submissive role, when confronted by superiors who were not treating others fairly and who were being unkind, she did not challenge that power relationship, instead choosing to remain silent and treat her own staff kindly, with respect, etc. In reality, she was replicating the power dynamics she saw in her parents’ marriage.

In other narratives the women indicated that they learned to exhibit this behavior of treating others with respect as a manager as a result of the negative stories their parents told.

Sometimes they made a conscious decisions to treat their employees better than their parents were treated by their managers; while other women didn't make conscious decisions however when telling of their experiences, they came to realize that their chosen management style was reflective of their impressions of the negative managers their parents described. Katharine for example talks about the stories her father would tell regarding the union versus manager situations at his place of employment and their influence upon her as a manager. However, just as in Margaret's case, when confronted with behavior of a superior who was not treating her in a way that she thought she should be treated, Katharine did not challenge that power relationship, but chose to continue to work hard and prove herself. In telling that story, she said that she kept telling herself, "Don't change yourself, don't change your values to conform, to get by or to make my life easier...but stick to those core values and in the end you'll come out ahead..."

In recognizing the importance of treating others fairly, many of the women work side by side with their staff, in apparent blatant disregard for the traditional power relationships between manager and employee, even when such behavior is frowned upon by their management peers and/or those in positions of power over them. Some of this willingness can be directly related to the negative views of the manager/employee relationships they heard from their parents as they were growing up in their working class homes.

Olivia and Jennifer also recognized the importance that the value of treating others fairly and with respect had upon them and their manager style. But these women were willing to confront those in a position of power when they felt that the value was threatened.

In some of the women's narratives, it appears as if they are uncomfortable with their own power as it related to their interaction with other people, specifically their employees. Some of the women indicated they were uncomfortable with disciplining or terminating employees or

with notices of downsizing that they delivered to staff; another spoke of her dismay over the way she handled a conflict with an employee; and some of the women talked about their internal conflicts regarding the decisions that they had to make as a senior level managers. Ann talked about her discomfort with her own power when she said, “do you... force that power below in a lower level ... do things that in your heart you wouldn’t have done... that’s where you have to decide, is it worth the power or is it worth keeping your integrity...”

Power relationships and even their own power had an impact on these women and upon the exercise of their values of treating others with respect and fairness. Power also had an impact upon them in terms of the expectations placed upon them as a manager.

Expectations of a manager

All individuals are the creation of the social aspects of power; their identities and the strategies they utilize in the development of those identities are both results of and impacted by power relationships. From a feminist perspective, identities are not fixed (Flannery, 2000; Tisdell, 2000; Townley, 1993); “identities are not absolute but always relational...” (Clegg, 1989 cited in Townley, 1993, p. 522). At the same time, however identities are impacted by the power relationships internalized through childhood experiences, observations and discussions in homes and family relationships. In essence then, as women’s identities change based upon social contexts (Hayes, 2000), experiences (Tisdell, 2000) and self esteem (Flannery, 2000), the influence and impact of power relationships upon their identities changes as well. “The individual is an effect of power and at the same time...it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

Because the women in this study identified themselves as both working class women and managers, at times they had conflicts (internal and/or external) relative to the expectations placed

upon them as a manager by those in power within the organization. In light of Foucault's (1980) description of power within an organization as "power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation [sic]" or "as something that circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (p. 98), it became apparent that the use of power in their manager roles and the impact of conflicts regarding power relationships was a large part of the issues and experiences the women revealed in their narratives.

In some of the narratives, the women showed evidence of the internalization of the expectations placed upon them, taking in those expectations and controlling their own thoughts and behaviors as a result (Foucault, 1980). Wendy's need to obey the rules because that's why the rules exist; Ann doing what was expected of her because it was expected of her; and Amy managing the way her superior desired despite her own unhappiness with that micromanagement approach are all examples of the women internalizing the expectations placed upon them by those in power within the organization. In their narratives, none of those three women ever mentioned the possibility of challenging these expectations or considered that maybe they were unrealistic or not in their best interest. On the contrary, Wendy for example said "if this is the rule, this is what we do. We don't break it; we don't try to go around it; the rules are there... and we need to respect them." Similarly, in Amy's narrative she revealed that although she doesn't like that she manages this way, it is what she has to do, "I'm really more of a micromanager than I'm really comfortable being...what I have to be right now in order to ...meet expectations..."

In other narratives, the women told of consequences they paid as a result of challenging the expectations placed upon them by those in power. Olivia's example of being kicked under the table by her superior when she was speaking too honestly; Lisa's example of being chastised by her superior for being too efficient; Katharine's example of the reaction of a senior executive

when she refused an opportunity he offered her to move up within the organization; and Jennifer's struggles with her superiors over her choice of lifestyle and marriage partners were all examples of consequences these women have dealt with as a result of challenging the expectations laid out for them. However, similar to Wendy, Ann and Amy, none of the women indicated that they overtly challenged the power relationships within the organization as a result of the consequences they endured. In fact, quite the reverse occurred. For example, instead of challenging her superior for kicking her under the table or continuing to speak her mind with honesty in those types of situations, Olivia learned she needed to keep quiet. She said, "I was trying to tell the truth...and I got kicked under the table, very hard. And that's when I learned that sometimes you just don't say anything at all..."

A number of the women talked about the conflict they had in balancing their working class values with their own power as a result of their position and the expectations relating to that position power. In the previous section, I already relayed examples of some of the participants being uncomfortable with disciplinary actions, employee terminations and downsizing. But other women revealed their discomfort with other expectations that were placed upon them regarding how they were to behave or how they were expected to manage. Wendy talked about how she was expected to staff the organization when she was in a higher level position; expectations that went against her values of how to manage the employees, "it gives you conflict internally...you have one set of values that you grew up with...another set ...that you have to use at work." In this scenario, Wendy obeyed the rules and did what she was told. In the long run, however, she left that position because "the conflict really did get overwhelming."

Along the same vein, Gracie talked about being a manager meant balancing the needs of the employees with the need to run a lucrative department. This requires she manage her own

power in the organization; “I think it’s a balancing act and that’s the struggle...good managers, we give everything we can to our staff and we still have to make the business profitable...”

Several of the women brought up the aspect of common sense and the need to use common sense in their roles as managers. However, this working class value was not always seen as significant by those in power in the organization. Jennifer, Lisa, Katharine and Ann all brought up the topic of common sense and of the need for decisions made to make sense. All indicated that there have been times when they believed decisions made within the organization by superiors did not make sense. However, again, none of the women indicated any occasions when they challenged those in power who were making those nonsensical decisions. In fact, Wendy said she is trusting and supportive of decisions made by those in power within the organization, “people in authority make decisions that I don’t really care for, but ...they have a perspective that I don’t have. They see things that I don’t...I have to think that works with people higher up...”

Other thoughts on power

The women in the study clearly dealt with issues of power and power relationships in their experiences as managers. At times, the power issues were related to their own power and how comfortable or uncomfortable they were with it and its use. On other occasions, the narratives revealed internal and external struggles the women had with superiors, for example over the use of power in how people were treated and over behaviors or actions expected of them in their manager roles.

I now turn to comparing the information obtained from the narratives of the women in this study to the literature informing this study in Chapter Two.

Findings in the Context of the Literature

In Chapter Two I review the theoretical, class based and other relevant literature that informed this study. In this section, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to the literature in Chapter Two. However, I do not repeat the previous section where I compared the results of the study with the critical theory and critical feminist theory literature.

Working class women

In Chapter Two, I discuss literature relating to identity development in working class women. In that literature review, these themes emerged as central to the identity development in working class women: the role of the family and the community, and the impact of school and work experiences.

The role of the family and community

In the narratives, all of the women talked about the importance of family and the influence their families of origin had upon them. A recurring theme in the literature is the expectation that the children in working class families will be good and well behaved (Edwards, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1994). Several women discussed that during this study. Jennifer talked about it in the reverse; she talked of stories from her childhood and adolescence where she defied the rules and ran around on the streets; but her childhood was chaotic and her parents' marriage and consequently her home life were very unsettled.

The literature also points to the importance of the mother figure in the working class family (Edwards 2004) and again, many women talked about their mothers and the important role they played in their childhood; several women also commented on their mothers' influence on their management style today. Other literature points to the importance of marriage and

traditional, patriarchal gendered expectations within the working class family life (hooks, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Rubin, 1994), which also came out through the narratives.

The literature regarding working class women's identity development discusses the importance of the community in reinforcing working class values and serving as an additional support for working class parents in raising their children (Fox, 2004; Fran, 1998; Rubin, 1976, 1994). However, the women in this study did not speak too much of their community growing up. Olivia talked about the members of her small working class community looking out for each other and others such as Amy and Katharine talked about the expectations that their friends would be acceptable to their parents, but not much more than this was said as a part of the interviews or the narratives themselves.

From the analysis of the women's narratives it became clear that all of them have learned a strong work ethic from their working class families. However, upon closer scrutiny, it became apparent that most of the women's primary source of learning this value is from their father. This became important especially when coupled with the gender expectations many of the women also internalized; they expect themselves to work hard as did their fathers, while still expecting they will meet the needs of others required of them as wives and mothers. When they failed, or when they perceived themselves to fail in this "Catch 22," they blame themselves.

Interestingly, husbands are rarely mentioned in the women's narratives. The struggle to be nurturing and a "good wife and mother" while being an assertive, strong hard working manager was the women's lonely, internal struggle. Only through this study did they come to realize other women from the working class shared similar struggles.

The role of the school and work

The women in the study did not speak very much about their school experiences. There was not any indication that they were separated out or discriminated against as a result of their working class culture as was found in Luttrell's studies (1987, 1997). Almost all of the women talked about the expectation that they would get good grades; this expectation was established for them by their parents. Several of the women talked about the importance of education as the key to a better life, a way out of the working class, and this is consistent with the literature (Lucey, et. al, 2003; Luttrell, 1997).

Common sense (in contrast with book learning) is often found to be a value espoused by working class women in the literature (Johnson, 2002; Luttrell, 1987; Willis, 1977) and the women in my study also spoke of the importance of common sense. But not only did they value common sense as a practical validation of life experiences, these women also viewed common sense as a practical approach to problem solving, managing their employees and making decisions in the workplace.

The importance of work on the identity of working class women is also consistently found in the literature (Brine & Waller, 2004; Dabrowski, 1983; Johnson, 2002; Nesbitt, 2006; Westwood, 1984; Willis, 1977). There is no question that work played an important role in how these women see themselves; however most of the women in the study made it very clear that their jobs do not define who they are; that they do not want to take themselves too seriously when it comes to work; that they are more than their jobs and that other aspects of their lives are much more important to them. Jennifer on the other hand, talked of her strong ambition and professional success; she desires to move into a senior management position so that she can

make changes to the organizational culture from within the ranks of power. However, she also acknowledged that her personal life has suffered as a result of her ambition and workaholic tendencies.

Women in management

In Chapter Two, I discuss the literature concerning women in management. In this study, I found some of the same comments and concerns were expressed, as a result of being women in management positions.

Work life balance

The literature addresses the issues that many women face in manager roles in finding a balance between their jobs and the demands of their families (Fenwick, 2002; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993). I found this to be true for many of the women in this study. As mentioned previously, some of the women stepped down from higher level positions because of the conflict between job expectations and the importance of their family, or decided against accepting a higher level position because of the same concerns. Some of the women also expressed concerns that they were unable to meet the gendered expectations placed upon them by their working class backgrounds and discussed what they had done to address this struggle.

Style and substance/negative stereotypes

The literature reveals issues that women who are managers face regarding the style and substance of their managerial or leadership style. Many women face stereotypes regarding their leadership styles and other negative stereotypes regarding women in professional or managerial roles (Chambers, 2000; Kolb, 1999; Northcraft & Gutek, 1993; Powell, 2002; Sczesny, 2003). The women in this study as a rule talked about their management style as being inclusive, respectful, fair and compassionate – to the point where most of them will work side by side with

their staff if needed in order to provide the kind of care or service that is needed within their departments. None of the women saw that this was a hindrance to their careers; however some did say that other managers do not do that, and senior leadership doesn't usually condone this practice. When there was discussion about other managers not "getting their hands dirty," the women in the study usually pointed that to their class background, although Ann specifically referenced a male who was her peer in the organization being unwilling to do so. She wasn't clear however, if that was related to his gender or to his class background; she was unfamiliar with the latter aspect of his identity.

Negotiating power and culture

The literature points to conflicts that women have had when in manager roles in terms of negotiating the power and culture of an organization (Bierema, 1999a; Maume, 2004; Offermann & Armitage, 1993; Poole, et. al., 1998). In the previous section I provided an in-depth discussion of conflicts that the women in my study had relating to the power relationships and expectations of managers relative to the organizational culture. I do not repeat that discussion here; but suffice it to say that the women's narratives corroborated this aspect of the literature.

Cultural identity conflict

A person's identity is tied to the forces of society, politics and organizations in addition to the relationships that she has. One's interpretation of the experiences she has and the words she hears, as well as her interactions with others and the impact of those social, political and organizational forces all influence identities as well. Identities shift over time as people grow and develop and succeed or fail in school, work and relationships (Flannery, 2000). As one reflects upon these forces, relationships and experiences, she may find herself questioning who she is,

the roles she plays as a result of job titles and relationship titles (such as wife or mother) and ultimately the identities that are tied to those roles may actually cause a conflict or struggle within her or even in the external portrayals of those identities.

Working class women in management

Nenga (2003) found that women who come from a working class background and then go into a middle class position such as a professor in the academy still feel working class. She argued, as did Johnson (2002) that a woman's social class in childhood impacts her for the rest of her life. Because a woman's gender and social class serve an important foundation for her values and beliefs which in turn influence her experiences and help to shape her identity; when moving from one class to another an identity conflict may occur (Ogbor, 2001). In addition, because members of the working class often have disrespect for managers and may lack faith in their ability to truly understand what it is that their employees do (Bratton, 2001; Howell, et. al, 2002; Westwood, 1984; Willis, 1977), questions arise as to the impact of that disrespect and lack of faith upon the identity of a woman from the working class who becomes a manager.

From the narratives presented in Chapter Four, the discussion of commonalities and differences within those narratives in Chapter Five, and the previous discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions and critical feminist theory, it is clear that there were aspects in each of the narratives relating to times when their working class values conflicted with the reality of their roles as a manager. For some of the women, conflicts occurred within themselves when they were unable to meet their working class expectations relating to their gender and their role as a wife and mother. For other women, struggles came when they needed to perform certain aspects of their manager role such as discipline or downsizing of staff and this conflicted with the way they expected to be able to treat others with fairness and respect. At other times, women

had conflicts with their superiors over the way the superiors treated others or the way the women themselves were treated (i.e., they were not treated with respect or fairness). Many of the women had struggles with the power relations within their organizations, especially in terms of how the organization expected them to behave as a manager.

A foot in two worlds

Flannery (2000) discusses the concept of border crossing from one culture to another. Others have conducted research on the experiences that women from working class backgrounds have when they enter the academy as professors. These researchers have found that these women become disillusioned, feeling isolated and sometimes alienated because they do not feel completely accepted by their working class families or their middle class colleagues (Nenga, 2003; Reahy, 1997; Richardson, et. al, 2004; Zandy 1993, 1995). Not all of the women in my study agreed with that. While realizing that there were different expectations asked of them as middle class managers, some of them felt as if they were doing their best to intertwine their working class values and the middle class manager expectations. They did not feel out of place as a result of being a working class woman in management, although they did acknowledge that they had struggles, some internal and some external, over conflicting expectations and relayed experiences of times when their values were not reinforced by the situations or appreciated by those in power within the organization. These women also came from patient care areas and supervised people who had similar working class backgrounds. This is common in a health care environment, particularly in patient care areas such as nursing.

On the other hand, some of the women expressed in various metaphors that they do see themselves as straddling a border between the values and beliefs they grew up embracing and the expectations put upon them in various ways by the organizational culture and those in power

within the organization. Gracie talked of a balancing act and likens her role as a working class woman manager to “serving two masters at all times.” Wendy also recognized that the expectations put on her as a manager are different than the way she would act at home or with her family. She said “there’s a different performance that you do.” And Lisa, more so than the others talked about how different she acts when she is with her working class in-laws than when she is at work in her manager role. She says she “puts on a different hat” and that “you do kind of feel like you’re leading two lives or something sometimes.” She, Wendy and Gracie all talked about this at the ‘group celebration’ we held after all the stories were developed and approved. The other women agreed and it became apparent that as working class women managers we do have a foot in two worlds.

Implications for Adult Education and HRD

As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, there has been research discussing conflicts that working class women face when they become members of the academy (Frye, et al, 2005; Hey, 2003; hooks, 2000; Nenga, 2003; Reay, 1997; Skeggs, 1997). There has also been research in the area of working class women in general and the conflicts they face throughout their lives within various socially constructed relationships such as family, community, schools and work (Edwards, 2004; Luttrell, 1997; Marshall, 1991; Rubin, 1994; Westwood, 1982). Additionally, research regarding power and patriarchy struggles faced by women managers has also been conducted (Bierema, 1996, 1999, 2003; Fenwick, 2002).

However, there has not been research conducted on the experiences, issues or struggles that working class women face when they become managers. As a result, this study adds to the adult education and human resource development literature in three ways. First, this dissertation presents findings from a research based study in relation to a marginalized segment of the

population, namely working class women. The narratives presented in their entirety in Chapter Four and my subsequent analysis of them gives voice to these women whose experiences and stories are often unheard in the adult education or human resource development literature. These findings are of significance to practitioners in the adult education and human resource development areas of such frequently female and often working class dominated fields such as the health care, retail, education, service and restaurant industries. Second, this study further adds to the literature relating to working class women academicians, strengthening some of those findings and revealing new insights such as the internal conflicts that the women in my study had relating to their own power and the expectations established for them by those in power within their organization. And third, this study provides information on a previously ignored population, namely working class women managers. Their experiences and struggles, particularly as those struggles relate to power relationships, their own management practice and the organizational culture are of particular importance to adult educators, human resource and human resource development professionals in understanding the background of working class women employees as they provide guidance, coaching, education and training for women from working class backgrounds prepare for and/or adapt to manager roles. These implications for practice are discussed in more detail below.

Working class women identity development

This study expands scholarly literature relating to working class women's experiences and identity development. Existing literature shows that women's social and class identity, as well as class related expectations of behavior are socially reproduced and affected by both internal and external sources and contexts (Lareau, 1987; Nesbitt, 2006; Ohmann, 2003; Settles, 2001; Smith & Hanley, 2003). It is clear from the women's narratives that there were and

continues to be many aspects to their identity as working class women and managers. All of the women indicated very strongly the influence of their working class childhoods upon them growing up and continuing today. Every one of the women agreed that her background and identity as a working class woman has had long term effects upon her, including affecting her management style. This reinforces the literature regarding social class of origin affecting the rest of one's life (Johnson, 2002).

The existing literature also discusses working class family and community life (Edwards, 2004; Fox, 2004; Luttrell, 1987, 1997; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1994), experiences that working class girls have in school (Lucey, et al, 2003; Luttrell, 1997) and the experiences of working class women in the workplace (Brine & Waller, 2004; Dabrowski, 1983; Johnson, 2002; Nesbitt, 2006; Rubin, 1994). The women's narratives in my study reinforce some of the central themes in the literature relating to the experiences of working class women. For example, one of the strongest commonalities among the narratives revolved around the importance of family and gendered expectations. The importance of family and the replication of gendered expectations was not only a major theme arising from the narratives, but also a major source of conflict for the women as they transitioned into a manager role. These conflicts were both internal and at times external and for three of the women they were significant enough to force them to choose family over a progressive career path.

The roles of the community and the school were not as noticeable in the narratives in my study, but of course as the study was situated in a workplace context, the role of work in developing the women's identity was strong. The findings within the narratives and subsequent analysis show the strength of the women's work roles and work related experiences upon them and their personal and professional identities. One of the aspects of the literature relating to

working class women in the workplace consistently has shown the importance of the informal learning structure as an approach to work (Nesbitt, 2006; Westwood, 1982; Willis, 1977). The findings in this study did not support that in the same way. The women in my study were managers, and as such they expected to perform managerial and administrative duties, not necessarily the front line work of patient care or service staff. However, many of the women in the study did talk about their willingness to work side by side with their staff when necessary to assist them in their duties and to know the nuances of their jobs. This was seen by them as a way of being thoughtful and compassionate to their staff and of showing them respect, as well as an indication that they were not above “getting their hands dirty” and working hard.

The findings of this study relating to working class women’s identity development are significant for adult educators in and outside of the workplace. These findings reinforce the impact of social class of origin and the values and experiences resulting from that working class background, upon the women as they mature and become employees. The values and identity they have of themselves as working class women stays with them throughout their adult working lives. Adult education practitioners who endeavor to make a difference in facilitating the education of women from this background need to keep in mind the values that are important to them and the types of experiences that have impacted and molded them to who they are today.

Crossing the border

This narrative inquiry adds to the literature relating to working class women who cross the class border. Previous literature relating to this situation is specific to working class women who become academicians. That literature found that these women often face identity issues and feel as if they are in “limbo” and “not belonging there” (Kauffman, 2003; Richardson, et al, 2004; Zandy, 1993). The narratives presented here do add to this literature, strengthening some

of those findings such as still feeling working class while living a middle class lifestyle (Nenga, 2003) as well as issues with conflicting expectations (Reay, 1997; Richardson, et al, 2004; Skeggs, 1997) and a desire to be accepted (Kauffman, 2003).

The narratives as presented in Chapter Four, the discussion of commonalities and differences of them presented in Chapter Five and the discussion of the findings and the relevance of them in relationship to the literature as presented earlier in this chapter reveal new insights into the experiences of working class women who cross the border into a management position. One such addition to this literature is the revealing in the narratives of internal conflicts that the women in my study had relating to their own use of power and the impact of the power relationships within their traditional patriarchal families growing up and today. These women also discussed struggles they had with the expectations established for them by those in power within their organization; some of those struggles were internal, others were external. Some of the women experienced conflict over their inability to meet gender and family expectations that were part of the hegemony they learned growing up working class and many of them also experienced conflicts or struggles relating to how they treated others, how they were treated by peers or superiors, or how they saw peers or superiors treating others in the workplace.

These conflicts were not discussed in the literature of working class women becoming academicians; perhaps because the academicians were not in roles where they had power by virtue of their position in the organization – at least not the kind of power inherent in a manager role in a business organization. These managers were also in roles where they not only had position power but were the recipients of the actions or behaviors of their superiors, those with more power within the organization. They had to find a way to balance these two aspects of power; Gracie called it, “a balancing act.”

Adult educators in higher education and in workplace learning environments who gain a better understanding of the issues that working class women face when they cross that class border into a middle class or upper middle class role such as a manager will be in a better position to help them, encourage them and empower them to achieve their goals and success in those new roles. Emancipatory adult educators need to understand and respect the participants in their classrooms – whether those classrooms are in a college or university setting or in a workplace training room or on a worksite somewhere – and in order to truly facilitate learning in an emancipatory way, these educators need to respect the experiences and knowledge that the participants bring with them to the learning environment, in whatever context that may be (Horton & Freire, 1990). Excellent adult educators recognize the importance of meeting adult participants where they are, recognizing the importance of their fears, emotions and experiences and acknowledging the impact of those experiences and struggles are keys to success in the field.

Working class women as managers

This study adds to the existing scholarly knowledge relating to women in management positions; however it adds a new dimension to the literature, where a void existed. The literature relating to the concerns and struggles that women in management face speaks to the expectations placed upon them such as struggles relating to work-life balance, negative stereotypes of their ability to manage, concerns negotiating power and culture within the organization and deficiencies in their management style (Bierema, 1999a, 1999b, 1996a; Boot & Tannen, 1997; Fagenson, 1993; Fenwick, 2002; Larsen, 2009; Northcraft & Gutek, 1993; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993; Pool, et. al, 1998; Powell, 2002). The findings in this study support some of those concerns, most notably struggles relating to work-life balance and negotiating power structures and organizational culture.

I have mentioned previously the impact of family and gendered expectations upon the women in the study and the resulting internal and external conflicts, in some instances affecting them so severely they opted to leave positions instead of continuing with the conflict. In addition, the women in the study shared experiences in their narratives relating to their attempts to negotiate the power structures within the organization; at times they were successful despite internal struggles. In other experiences, their narratives reveal that they were not successful in negotiating the power or organizational culture, instead opting to stay quiet, do what was expected of them and obey the rules.

Their choice of behaviors in their management style, their struggles in work-life balance and their conflicts with negotiating through the power structures and organizational culture were not always successful and the women often attributed their choices to their working class background. The themes of working hard, treating others fairly and with respect, the importance of family and gender expectations, and the conflicts with expectations of them as a manager all come from the values and expectations of the workplace and management that they learned as little girls in working class families. All of the women struggled with some of these areas in her manager role; some struggled with several of them.

These themes and the subsequent struggles the women encountered are of great significance to adult educators, especially adult educators in the workplace and those human resource development professions who are particularly interested in or practice in the area of management or leadership development. Realizing that all of the women faced some struggles in these areas, it would be appropriate for professionals who are educating working class women in the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies of management to recognize the role that these values and experiences play on the women's lives and careers. And also recognizing that three of

the women stepped down from more senior level positions and another refused an offer of one, adult educators in the workplace ought to be prepared to address these issues when conducting succession planning and executive leadership education.

Keeping true to the critical feminist approach used in this study, as well as the common sense values espoused by the women in the study, during the “celebration” I asked the women what practical approaches they would suggest in order to help human resource development and education professionals assist women who come from a working class background and become managers be successful in their roles. Their suggestions were:

- Recognize that working class women managers care a great deal about their employees and want to see them succeed. Give them the tools to help them accomplish that.
- Provide a mentoring program for new working class women managers to help them learn how to navigate the power structures and organizational culture especially in patriarchal organizations where those values of treating others fairly, the importance of family and gender, and expected behaviors for a manager may be challenged.
- Education regarding values conflicts and how to handle those, especially when their working class values conflict with those in superior positions within the organization.
- Using assessment tools to assess values, and providing practical approaches and interactive exercises using critical cases relating to those values and what to do.
- Emphasizing the use of collaboration to resolve differences, perhaps even a support group for women who come from working class backgrounds to help them use each other’s experiences and strategies to cope and succeed.

It is important to note that the implications for practice suggested by the women in the study are all about adapting to the changes expected of them when they became managers.

These “common sense” and practical (to them) suggestions again show their internalization of hegemony and power in that they believed working class women need to learn to adjust or acclimate to expectations placed upon them by those in power.

These implications for practice will assist adult educators in academic institutions prepare their working class students for management positions in the future, as well as current managers who might be a part of a management program of study at an institution of higher learning. In addition, educators in the workplace can learn the values and experiences that are associated with growing up working class and use this knowledge to connect with the participants in their training and development classes who might come from similar backgrounds. And finally, human resource development and professional trainers can use the information from the women’s narratives to help them prepare women who come from working class backgrounds have successful transitions into manager and leadership roles within an organization.

From a critical feminist perspective however, as an adult educator or HRD practitioner who wanted to utilize an emancipatory approach to adult learning, can glean from these suggestions as well; that is learn to challenge working class women to view these expectations from a critical perspective. Critical feminist and emancipatory adult educators can encourage working class women in similar situations to question or even confront the expectations of the dominant culture when they clash with their working class values – within the parameters of their own safety and well being, of course.

I turn now to suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

I began this research study with the objective of learning about the experiences of working class women managers; my intention was to discover all that I could about them and their experiences. As the dissertation process came to its completion, I realized that I have learned much; but there is much more left undiscovered. One of the purposes of this type of research is to ascertain what is still undiscovered, to open the door for future research in related areas.

Education as the key to a better life

This study examined the experiences of working class women managers through a critical feminist lens. Through this research the reader can recognize the continuing impact of a working class background upon the women in the study over the course of their lives, including this impact on their personal and professional lives as adults. Much of the research found in Chapter Two of this dissertation addressed narratives and stories of the women's experiences in their families of origin (Edwards, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2002; Rubin, 1994) and/or school experiences (Lucey, et al, 2003; Luttrell, 1987; 1997, Maneval, 2000). In some of this latter research one sees themes of the women who do go on to education beyond high school, themes of a desire for independence and a longing to break out of the working class struggles they saw in their parents' lives. Some of the women in my study talked about longing to have a better life and some of them talked about being rebellious and longing for autonomy. Future researchers can expand on this knowledge by looking at the experiences of working class women and the choices they make regarding education and future job/career options. Such knowledge will be helpful not only for educators in the school systems in dealing with children and adolescents, but also in institutions of higher learning such as technical schools, community colleges and other

colleges where young and mature working class women will enter as students in a quest for education as the key to a better life.

Working class women at work

The research examined in Chapter Two that addressed working class women in the workplace specifically dealt with two extremes; women in manufacturing or other service roles and women in academia.

Working class women in working class jobs

Seven of the nine women in my study started out in front line positions either as nurses or in other patient care or support roles within a health care organization. These are jobs that are common for working class women as they are considered of higher status than factory or service work, can be obtained with only a year or two of education beyond high school (education which can usually be attained at a local technical school or community college), and are usually relatively well paying compared to service, retail or restaurant type of positions. Interestingly, they are also generally considered to be acceptable jobs for women, positions such as nursing or other technical patient care positions. The research in Chapter Two relating to working class women in the workplace primarily addressed factory types of roles where they attempted to gain control over their work, at times in defiance of their superiors and often have limited marketable skills (Westwood, 1982; Willis, 1977).

In this study, for the most part the women entered the workforce with marketable skills; and usually went on to attain a degree after they were in the workforce as a condition to being promoted to a manager role or as a result of realizing they needed to learn more once they were in a manager role. Several of the women had graduate degrees, all of which were obtained while working full time; only two of the women did not have a degree at all, but both of them were

actively pursuing degrees during the time of this study. Future research on working class women in traditionally working class roles can explore the characteristics and values of the women who do go on to manager roles and higher education – is the education a means to an end as was the case with the women in my study, or as an attempt to learn more and be better informed and educated. In my study, even Wendy who went on to obtain her degree after she was in a manager role, did so in an attempt to learn more and be more proficient at her job; a means to an end. In fact, the two women who had their degrees before entering the workforce both saw their college experience and their degrees as a means to an end – the key to a better life. They wanted professional positions, as opposed to the hard laboring positions they saw their parents have; the way to get there was through a degree.

Working class women in academia, professional or manager roles

The research literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two that addressed working class women who leave their working class roots and cross the border into a middle class position was situated in academia. The findings from that research generally indicated that the women who had made this border crossing (Flannery, 2000) felt as if they were not at home in their old working class environment nor comfortable in their new middle class academic context; in a sense they straddled both environments (Johnson, 2002; Ogbor, 2001; Reahy, 2007; Zandy, 1993). Those findings were reinforced by the women's narratives in this study, with the added issues relating to power and power relationships within the organizational context due to their roles as managers. Future research should focus on women in management who came from a working class background to see if the findings from the narratives in this study are similar in other organizations.

Of special interest would be narratives of working class women managers who are not in health care organizations. Health care is a predominantly female organization and patient care roles are clearly dominated by women (with the exception of surgeons and other positions of power within the organizations such as senior leadership and CEO roles). It is not uncommon for women to be in management positions within a health care organization, especially in middle management positions which were the roles of the women in this study. Thus, some of the concerns elucidated in Chapter Two regarding women in management roles were not found in this study, perhaps because many of the front line supervisory and middle management roles in a health care organization are filled by women. In other organizations, businesses or industries this is not the case. Of particular interest would be women in for profit companies, as well as in national and international organizations. The women in this study worked in a regional, not for profit health care organization. Future research conducted with women in management roles within these other types of organizations would be interesting to see if those women have similar conflicts or struggles relating to their class backgrounds and values.

In addition, these women saw themselves as professionals; in other businesses or industries that may not be the case and women who are from working class backgrounds who transition to a management role may not see themselves as professionals. Does that make a difference in the way they approach their roles as a manager? Will that make a difference in the struggles that they face when confronting issues of power, patriarchy and hegemony in their workplaces? Future research on women who make that kind of transition can help to shed some light on these questions.

In this study, a few of the women stepped down from higher level positions as a result of the struggles they faced between their values and the expectations placed upon them in those

positions. Does this happen in other organizations, businesses or industries? Clearly the women in this study saw this choice resulting from their working class values conflicting with the expectations placed upon them. Would that be replicated in other circumstances? Future research on working class women who become executives would be of interest to understanding not only the impact of working class origins and values on their identity but also how they negotiate the power structures within a patriarchal organization at the highest levels.

Working class men

This study and the research discussed in Chapter Two clearly focus on working class women. We know that our class impacts and influences every aspect of our lives, and yet “class is so unexplored in North American adult education” (Nesbitt, 2005, p. 1). It stands to reason then that a man’s working class origins would also affect him throughout the rest of his life, including his choices of education, job/career and into his role as a manager should he choose that path.

We see in the literature in Chapter Two that the role of the family and gendered expectations are strong influences on working class women throughout their lives. This was reinforced by the women in my study. Wouldn’t these same values be replicated in working class men? Of course the expectations placed upon them as working class males would be different than working class females, but the fact that those expectations will exist seems a logical assumption. How will those values impact them in their jobs and careers? Future research on working class men in the workplace, in traditionally working class jobs and in professional, academic and manager roles would be an interesting addition to the adult education and human resource development literature.

In addition, will the other themes found in this study, those of strong work ethic, treating others fairly and struggles over the expectations of a manager be replicated when studying working class men? If the women struggled with some of these things as a result of their gender and the expectations placed upon them and assumptions made about them as women in a patriarchal hierarchical society, what will be the expectations placed upon and assumptions made about the men who come from similar background? Will their struggles be the same? Will they have struggles or conflicts in a manager role at all, given that they are men in a patriarchal organization and society? And yet, they are from an oppressed background, therefore how has that affected them? There is much room for future research in these areas.

Additional areas for research resulting from this study

Another area for future research includes exploring the impact of religion or spirituality upon the women's lives and experiences. Several of the women talked about their families being active in the church while they were growing up, but the aspect of faith or spirituality was not addressed in their narratives.

In addition as discussed earlier in this chapter, the women in the study did not talk very much about the roles of their husbands in their lives – even though all of them were married. What was the role of their husbands in the women's experiences of being working class women managers? Wendy talked about the ultimatum her husband gave her and Jennifer mentioned her husband not permitting her to have a cleaning lady, but none of the women discussed in any significant way her husband's impact (or lack of impact for that matter) on her experiences as a working class woman manager. There is much room for future research in this area.

Summarizing thoughts on future research

Studying people and helping them to reflect upon and make sense of their experiences in light of aspects of their culture, class, hegemony and power can be a daunting process. However, it is through this type of research, particularly critical feminist research that information can be learned about how people have overcome or given into these forces that oppress them in a patriarchal society. It is also through this feminist research, especially narrative inquiry that researchers give voice to those who have been marginalized by those patriarchal forces of power in the culture.

Final Reflections

When I entered this doctoral program in 2003, it was with the intent of attaining the degree so that I could change professions and become a full time professor; as a means to an end and the attainment of a goal I set for myself as a 21 year old senior in college. In my wildest imaginings, I never thought that I would end up re-defining my identity as a working class woman.

Through the beginnings of this idea and the initial literature review where I gained a new appreciation of the historical significance of women from the working class, through the process of coming to an understanding of critical feminist theory where I found a kinship with people who thought like me and validated that maybe those myths of the American Dream and meritocracy and all men [but not women of course] are created equal and anyone can make it if he tries hard enough.... were just myths, as I had suspected for a very long time. Through this journey, I discovered the idea of giving voice to those who are marginalized – an idea that came to fruition through the use of narratives and having the voices of the women in the study heard through their “stories.”

The women became more than just participants in a study; they became partners in this dissertation. They see themselves that way and I see them in that light as well. It is through their willingness to share their experiences, sometimes painful, often emotional and always sincere, that it became clear they had all had doubts, apprehensions and bumps in the road in their journey as managers. Their experiences are all unique of course, but many aspects of their narratives are similar because their emotional responses to the events in their lives often were similar as a result of their class backgrounds. I too am able to understand what they are saying and have shared some of those same “structures of feelings” (Nenga, 2003) based on my background. Their experiences were of course different from mine, but through their eyes I was able to see very clearly the positive attributes of a working class background and appreciate that those values and characteristics are still an important part of my life – often without my realizing it. All the women have expressed their appreciation on participating in the study and have stated in one way or another that their participation has helped them to realize the impact of their background upon their lives today and given them a whole new appreciation for the values and the experiences they had while growing up working class.

Through the willingness of the women to share their experiences and reveal their doubts, fears and emotions, it has become apparent that their working class backgrounds have impacted and continue to impact their identities of themselves as working class women and as managers.

This journey has also made me reflect upon the role that my own working class background has played in my life as a manager, even though like a number of the women in the study, I have been a manager for over 20 years. And like them, I too can say that the experience of being a working class woman manager is like having a foot in two worlds.

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APPENDIX A



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Will I still keep my common sense? The stories of working class women becoming managers.

Principal Investigator: Karen McMillen Dielmann
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Advisor: Dr. Daniele D. Flannery
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1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to further the understanding of the experiences of working class women who become managers. By conducting this research I hope that you will share any factors that you see as important and that contributed to and influenced your transition to a manager role. Through exploring your past experiences and stories, I hope that a fuller understanding of your transition to a manager role will be developed.
2. **Procedures to be followed:**
 - a. You will be asked to participate in at least two conversational interviews in your home or in a location that is mutually agreeable to both you and me.
 - b. The conversational interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by me, the researcher.
 - c. You will be asked to review the transcripts of your interviews and to discuss your thoughts with me, the researcher in order to clarify anything that seems to be unclear and to check for accuracy.
 - d. You will be asked to participate in a follow up meeting with the other participants near the conclusion of the research study to review the findings and to discuss your reactions to them.
 - e. The follow up meeting will be audio recorded and transcribed by me, the researcher.
3. **Duration/Time:**
 - a. Each of the two conversational interviews will last approximately two to two and one half hours.
 - b. It is estimated that it will take approximately one hour to review each of the transcripts from the conversational interviews.

- c. It is anticipated that the follow up meeting will last approximately two hours.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at my home in a locked file and/or password protected computer file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
- a. The audiotapes of your interviews will be transcribed verbatim by me, the researcher.
 - i. _____ I give permission to be audio taped.
 - ii. _____ I do not give permission to be audio taped.
 - b. I, as the researcher and my advisor will have access to the taped recordings of your interviews and to the transcripts for purposes of data analysis.
 - c. As you will participate in a follow up meeting to include the other research participants, your consent to participate in this study and your signature below indicate your understanding that if you speak about the contents of the follow up meeting outside the group, it is expected that you will not tell others what individual participants said.
 - d. The follow up meeting including you and the other participants will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim by me.
 - i. _____ I give permission to be audio taped at the follow up meeting.
 - ii. _____ I do not give permission to be audio taped at the follow up meeting.
 - e. All audiotapes and transcripts will be secured for five years following completion of the study and final approval of the dissertation; to be kept in a locked file cabinet or password protected computer file in my home. The anticipated date for destruction of the data is on December 31, 2013.
 - f. In the publication or presentation of the research findings, your name or identifying information will not be used. Instead, I will use pseudonyms.
5. **Right to Ask Questions:**
- a. You may ask me questions about this research study and I will answer them.
 - b. If you wish to talk to someone else regarding your questions, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Daniele Flannery at 717-948-6219 with questions or concerns about this study.
6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed and that I have answered any questions from the above participant as fully as possible.

Person Obtaining Consent (the researcher)

Date

APPENDIX B

Verbal Script to Recruit Participants in Research Study

Working Project title: “Will I still keep my common sense: Stories of working class women becoming managers.”

Phone call or face to face initiation of conversation:

Hi, as you may know, I am conducting a research study for my doctoral dissertation. I am working on my Doctorate in Education through Penn State University.

The purpose of my research study is to further the understanding of the experiences of women who come from a working class background and become managers. I am currently seeking volunteers to participate in my study.

Although I am not sure of your background and experiences in this area, you were suggested to me as someone who might be interested in learning more about my study and possibly being a participant.

Would that be of interest to you?

If the potential volunteer says “yes”, then I will arrange for a time to meet to review the criteria for participation and the consent forms.

If the potential volunteer says “no”, then I will thank her for her time and ask her if she can recommend someone else who I might talk to as a potential research study volunteer.

APPENDIX C

Protocol – questions to elicit participants’ stories on transitioning from a working class background to a manager position (not all will be used in every situation – one will be used to elicit conversation)

1. Tell me your story of your early career years.
2. I come from a working class background and transitioned into a manager role. Tell me the story of your transition into a manager role.
3. Tell me the story of your experience of becoming a manager.
4. (Assuming the participant was promoted from within): Tell me the story of your promotion.

The following are questions to encourage ongoing dialogue during those conversational interviews.

1. What other experiences stand out for you?
2. What else do you remember about that?
3. Then what happened....
4. That’s interesting.....
5. What makes you say that....?
6. Tell me more...
7. Can you give me more details about that?

8. Help me understand what you experienced.
9. Tell me more about that.
10. How did you feel about that?
11. What happened next?
12. How did you feel when that happened?
13. What happened after that?
14. How did you react to that, or after that, or when that happened?
15. How did others in your life react when that happened?

APPENDIX D

Questions for [one of the participants] prepared for Interview #2

Prior to our second interview, please review the following questions. Make notes if you wish, but I'd like to discuss these areas when we meet. Remember, my end intention will be to write your "story".

Thanks, Karen

1. Tell me an experience that will help me understand why you say you value working hard.
2. Tell me an experience that will help me understand why you say you value "don't quit".
3. Tell me a story about working with your staff and knowing their jobs.
4. I have had experiences where my working class values conflicted with the values of a middle class boss or peer. Have you had any similar experiences or anything somewhat similar happen to you?
5. Tell me about when you felt you'd finally made it.
6. Tell me what your family used to say about management.
7. What was your perception of what your parents did for a living?
8. Tell me about a conflict at work where you feel your background influenced your reaction.
9. Some women from a working class background experience a conflict when they go into a manager role. That conflict can either be internal or external. Does that comment resonate with you or make you think of any experiences you may have regarding such a conflict?
10. What is it like when you're with your working class relatives and the conversation turns to work and/or managers/bosses? Can you recall any conversations?
11. Tell me an experience that will help me understand why you say "following through" is important to you.
12. If I asked your mother what her dream had been for you, what would it be?
13. If I asked your parents what it is that you do, what would they tell me? Can you tell me an experience that will help me understand that?

14. One area I struggle with is cleaning my house; I usually do a clean up job when I know my mother is coming to visit; yet I refuse to get a cleaning lady, even though I could afford to do so. Do you have any similar issues or anything like that in your life now that you can perhaps relate back to your upbringing?
15. Once in awhile my mother or one of my extended family members will comment to me “you’re talking like a manager” or some similar remark derogatory to managers. Have you had any similar experiences or does that make you think of any somewhat related experience?
16. Tell me an experience that will help me understand how you value, respect and show empathy for your staff.
17. In reading over the transcript from the first interview, can you think of any other experiences that will help me in writing and in understanding your story?
18. Tell me about an experience where you felt you had succeeded.
19. Tell me about a time when you had a sufficient amount or a lot of self confidence. Tell me about a time when you lacked self confidence.
20. Tell me about an experience when you were new to management. What did you learn from it?
21. My mother used to say things like “you may be smart, but you have no common sense”. To her, ‘common sense’ was the most important thing to have, not book smarts. Does that comment resonate with you – do you have any similar experiences or sayings that were important in your household and how they may impact you today?

Please read and reflect upon the following brief paragraphs. Do any of them resonate with experiences you’ve had during your life and career? You can make notes if you think that will help us to discuss the issues raised in them.

1. While class was never talked about in our household, the importance of work – of working hard – was praised. Our father worked hard at his job and mama worked hard in the home. Hard work was a virtue. As children we heard again and again that idleness was dangerous. At church we were told to “work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work”. My father and his buddies talked about hierarchies in the world of work, expressing their rage at bosses who did little but were better paid (hooks, 2000, p. 22).

2. Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it...Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being (Kuhn, cited in Hey, 2003, p. 329).

3. [In one study] most women were reluctant to move into a supervisor role because supervising denied them the easy companionship and emotional support of other women. [One woman for example] disliked 'dealing with the staff when there's problems. Telling them when they've done something wrong, that sort of thing. When I have to stop being their friend and be their boss, I don't like that' (Johnson, 2002, p. 54).

4. [In the US] class is masked, hidden behind a national mythology of rugged individualism, social mobility, and political equality. Class consciousness is thwarted by the institutionalized confusion of democracy and capitalism. Class identity is easier to obscure and deny than gender or race identity. If you are born into the working class and are willing to change your speech, your gestures, your appearance – in essence, to deny the culture of your home and the working class self of your childhood – then you might 'pass' as a member of the dominant culture. But you will never belong there ((Zandy, 1993, p. 2).

Karen McMillen Dielmann

Teaching and Related Experience

- April-Oct. 2008 Subject Matter Expert: Created on-line course for South University
- Aug. 2006-Present Part time faculty, Department of Business Administration
Elizabethtown College; Elizabethtown, PA
- Sept. 1998-Present Adjunct Faculty, Department of Business & Economics
Lebanon Valley College; Annville, PA

Recent Professional Experience

- Dec. 2004-Present Director of Education: Good Samaritan Health System; Lebanon, PA
- Aug. 2000-Present Dir. Human Resources: Good Samaritan Health System; Lebanon, PA
- Aug. 1997-Aug. 2000 Dir. Employment & Labor Relations PinnacleHealth System; Harrisburg, PA

Education

- Doctor of Education: Adult Education; Penn State; Harrisburg, PA
Dissertation successfully defended: December 10, 2008
Dissertation title: "A foot in two worlds: A narrative inquiry of the experiences of working class women managers"
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Recent Presentations and Publications

- Dielmann, K.M. (2009, February). "A foot in two worlds: The stories of working class women managers." Scheduled presentation at the Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference. Washington, D.C.
- Dielmann, K.M. (2007, February). *On working class women becoming managers: A literature review.* Paper published in proceedings of Pennsylvania Adult and Continuing Education Research Conference. Harrisburg, PA.
- Dielmann, K.M. (2006, December). *The struggle to be me: The stories of working class women becoming managers.* Presentation at 2nd Adult Education Doctoral Program Research Forum. Harrisburg, PA.
- Dielmann, K.M. & Thompson, P.M. (2006, February). Discussion of Coughlin, L., Ulgard, E., & Hollihan, K. (Eds). (2005). *Enlightened power: How women are transforming the practice of leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Food N' Thought presentation at Academy of Human Resource Development Conference. Columbus, OH.

Professional Organizations and Related Information

- Manuscript Reviewer: Adult Education Quarterly
- Manuscript Reviewer and Symposium Facilitator: Academy of Human Resource Development 2009 Conference, Washington, D.C.; and 2007 Conference, Indianapolis, IN.