Can You Go Home Again?
The Impact of Social Class Mobility Via Graduate Education on Identity and Family Relationships

By
Tiffany C. Miller

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The City University of New York

2006

UMI Number: 3231947

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Peter Fraenkel, Ph.D. .

Date | Chair of Examining Committee

Joseph Glick, Ph.D. .

Date | Executive Officer

Steve Tuber, Ph.D. .

Paul Wachtel, Ph.D. .

Kirkland Vaughans, Ph.D. .

Karen Singleton, Ph.D. .

Supervision Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

Can You Go Home Again?
The Impact of Social Class Mobility Via Graduate Education
on Identity and Family Relationships

By
Tiffany C. Miller

Advisor: Peter Fraenkel, Ph.D.

This study utilized a qualitative, grounded theory approach to explore how doctoral graduates raised in working class households experience the impact of academic, professional, and economic success on their identity and relationships with close family members. A semi-structured interview was administered to a heterogeneous sample of 13 participants whose parents were not college educated, who had completed their degree no more than three years prior and who were gainfully employed. The participants in this study each expressed the sense that social mobility via education is a unique experience that does not fully correspond with the usual and expected reactions to success in education and financial stability that persons raised in middle or upper social classes would experience. The participants overwhelmingly supported the idea that it is essentially difficult, but not impossible to integrate their dual class identities following the completion of their social mobility journey. Participants and family members were first faced with the reality that the process of becoming highly educated produced a change in the self encompassing morals, values, ideals, customs, attitudes, beliefs, speech patterns and thought processes. The next major change for the socially mobile intellectual and their family members was the financial and social class shift that placed them in the position to possess more and have more opportunities than their family. Participants who

came from families that accepted and supported their education without seeing it as a threat or the process of obtaining it as a defection were able to integrate their dual class identities with relative success. Those participants who experienced their working class status as a burden, felt disadvantaged in childhood and had family members who had difficulty accepting their educated selves experienced a disintegration of their class identity accompanied by self-doubt resulting in painful feelings of alienation and the questioning of the legitimacy of their success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My acknowledgements must begin with my home court. To my Mom and Daddy, the most loving, creative, resilient and resourceful parents a child could ever have. My early beginnings were humble in many ways, but rich in the most important ways thanks to you both. You encouraged me to heed my calling in life, which was to love and to give. To Andrea and Dana whose laughter alone kept me going. No one is more fortunate than I to have you guys as sisters.

I owe a tremendous debt to my participants who freely opened their lives to me. I had the opportunity to meet some beautiful, truly inspiring individuals. These participants made me laugh, made me cry and educated me exponentially and for that I give a thousand thank yous.

To Diana Marie Gutierrez, Ph.D. my friend, my sister, my colleague, my voice of reason, my hero, my therapist, my partner in crime… you had me at hello! No words can describe how thankful I am to have had you by my side throughout this journey. Your strength and perseverance have been an inspiration for me. To Tiffany P. Crawshaw, Psy.D. my doppelganger on the West Coast. You were there for me at Chapman, you've been there for me ever since and I thank you.

Special thanks go out to my dissertation committee, Drs. Peter Fraenkel, Steve Tuber, and Paul Wachtel. Their guidance, feedback, and suggestions made this endeavor possible. I would like to acknowledge Peter in particular. His careful attention to detail, consistent support and motivation were vital to the completion of this mammoth task.

To Kirkland Vaughans, Ph.D. my mentor and guide. You took me under your wing and refused to let go. I thank you so much for your constant encouragement and unending faith in me. I want to thank Karen Singleton, Ph.D. who has been my secret role

model for the past eight years. Your intelligence, gentleness and poise have always been a source of inspiration.

To Victor Cruz, M.S.W. I must say a heartfelt thank you for your guidance and support throughout this and all other journeys. And finally to Jordan Edward Miller-Lulla, my love, my light, my life, all that I do is for you, now and forever. This "disserpation" is finally done my lovey, let's go out and play!!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

> *In my trajectory from working-class family of origin to the threshold of middle-class professional status, I have suffered a loss my present context doesn't even recognize as a loss; my education has destroyed something even while it has been re-creating me in its own image. -Carolyn Leste Law, 1995*

On May 15th 2005, the New York Times began a two week long series of daily articles on social class in America. Experts reportedly spent over a year investigating and exploring the ways in which class influences a person's destiny. The writers reported that in the past thirty years class has come to play a greater role in American life than was previously expected. As it relates to the present study, class was cited as a very strong predictor in educational success at a time when one's level of education plays an even greater role in social status and financial security (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005).

This study will examine how individuals who were raised in working class households and completed a graduate education, experience the impact of education and class mobility on their identity and their family relationships. The topic of this study was generated from personal life experience as well as clinical interactions with educated, socially mobile individuals. Social mobility via education is undoubtedly a complex phenomenon with a myriad of outcomes. The above quote by Carolyn Leste Law expresses one of the many experiences of the mobility process. What is striking about

Law's brief description is the inherent, yet surprising, conflict of positive and negative outcomes in this journey. Both loss and gain are pitted side by side forcing each individual involved in this process to encounter this conflict and hopefully resolve it to the best of his or her ability. Leste Law also states, "We must buy into academia in order to get out of the working class, but in doing so we also buy into the denigration of our origins and the preservation of class inequalities" (Leste Law, 1995, p. 7). This journey to social mobility is complicated, conflicted and highly personal with each individual defining his or her own path based upon their internal resources, family relationships, class culture and values. This study is intended to elucidate these sometimes hidden conflicts and outline the various paths that these participants have taken in their journey toward success and prosperity.

Clinical Observations

As a training psychologist, I had the opportunity to treat graduate students from working class backgrounds in therapy. During my training a young, African American man presented with difficulties with his family around the issue of his graduate school education. John (name changed to maintain confidentiality) was a very intelligent, articulate graduate student who believed that his family members, both nuclear and extended, looked down on him because he attended graduate school. He reported being berated by his family because he studied too much and wasn't involved in a romantic relationship and because he did not engage in leisure activities typical for young men in his age range and culture. The patient was even falsely labeled as a homosexual by some of his family members. In his family this label or accusation was viewed as an insult representing a desperate, hurtful attempt for the family to find an explanation for his

divergent behavior. John refused to read in front of his father because his father would make comments about him flaunting his intelligence. Family members often told him, "You think you're too good for us." He was excluded from his family and treated as if he were abnormal. Though his mother supported his education, she too relegated it to something that needed to be hidden rather than held out in the open and praised. Nearly all of his family members essentially denounced him because of his intellectual and academic pursuits, which caused a tremendous amount of anguish in this young man. He felt conflicted, confused, angry, resentful and most of all, alone. John was torn between his connection and responsibility to his family and his responsibility to himself to actualize his aspirations. John's struggle can be described as a search for his identity as well as a longing for affirmation for that identity from his family and community.

Another African American patient from a working class background seen in treatment struggled painfully through the process of succeeding in academia and adopting middle class ideals and values, while at the same time returning to her home only to find that she now devalued her family's lifestyle and values. In sessions, this patient defended vehemently against identifying with her working class parents. In the process of resisting internalizations present from infancy, the patient ended up denying some parts of herself. She was left feeling desperately alone with no sense of her true self. Indiscriminate anger resulted, stemming from what were interpreted in the therapy as feelings of loss and a sense of being ungrounded. By refuting the internalized caregiver she had no other objects with which to mirror. The loneliness and confusion consumed her.

Both patients in these examples struggled with the difficulty of negotiating the new aspects of their identity as a working class intellectuals with their families of origin.

Both patients were African American and had grown up in households where few, if any family members had been educated beyond high school. Though John's socioeconomic status growing up may have been described as lower middle class or upper lower class, he is still considered socially mobile in terms of his current educational pursuits and desired social status. The second patient, however, experienced more financial instability in her childhood and could be viewed as growing up in a lower or working class household. Each of these individuals were passionate about their field of study and their educational pursuits in general and were highly successful in their programs. The dichotomy between their level of education and that of their families of origin eventually produced a conflict of identity as well as a conflict in relating that proved difficult.

The Interaction of Social Class and Academia

As part of the "American Dream", much emphasis has been placed on securing a good education as a means to attain professional and economic success. For men and women from working class backgrounds, education often becomes the best (or only) way to increase one's earning potential and class status. With increasing specificity of training and higher degree requirements in today's job market, for some professions, a bachelor's degree will no longer suffice (Egan, 2005). Graduate school then becomes the next educational goal. For working class students, entering an undergraduate university can be a great personal challenge. The university setting represents an almost instantaneous class shift. Adjusting to this shift along with the responsibilities and psychological stressors of college can be an added burden. The progression to graduate school for these same students furthers the need for social and emotional adjustment and adaptation.

Each year numerous adults across the United States enroll in graduate school programs. Academia, the quintessential middle class environment, is often touted as the great social equalizer. Students from all cultures, races and social classes are accepted with the intention of creating great thinkers and skilled professionals. As a training therapist at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, I have had the opportunity to work with a multiethnic group of working class students, often the first college graduates in their families and witness how they braved uncharted territory in pursuing a graduate education with little or no preparation from their families or communities of origin. They were often not aware of the effects the process of a graduate education would have, not only on their minds, but on their identities as well. The graduate institution, for many, can become a source of stimulation for the intellect, a surrogate family, and/or a social outlet. The stress and pressure of maintaining graduate work often pushes students to new levels of competency and growth, but at the same time may take them to new depths of insecurity and frustration. Few can say that their identity has not been altered in some way after graduating from a doctoral program, regardless of the academic discipline studied or social class level.

Following completion of a graduate program, with diploma in hand, former students pound the pavement in search of adequate employment that is commensurate with the years of study invested. With hope, the professions they enter will provide the financial security expected. For former students of working class origins, the jobs they acquire after finishing graduate school often elevate their financial and social class level. Social class mobility has been the backbone of the American ideal since this country was founded. Slaves, immigrants, the poor and downtrodden have attempted to hold on to this

American dream, however fleeting or however limited (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). In their chapter on social mobility, Roberts and Rosenwald (2001) write, "What will happen to Cinderella after she marries the prince?" (p. 91). Most of us expect that, with everything her heart desires, she will live happily ever after. The lives of the upwardly socially mobile, whether the mobility occurs through marriage, education or professional advancement, often do not end up in sublime, unconflicted happiness. In order to make that class shift there are various adjustments that need to be made in somewhat the same way that an immigrant adjusts to the unfamiliar environment of a new country. It is often quite difficult to forget where one has come from, and adjust to a new environment regardless of how advantageous that new environment may be.

Though often ignored by the clinical psychology literature and American society in general, the effect of our social class is important on an intrapsychic and interpersonal level. As Neil Altman (1995) describes it, " One's class membership becomes a part of one's relatively stable sense of identity, of one's sense of the type of person one is" (p. 82). Class not only defines our economic, political and cultural characteristics, but also dictates those we associate with, the neighborhoods we live in, the leisure activities or aesthetic preferences we choose, the idiosyncrasies of our speech, and our level of comfort in certain environments. With this in mind it is easy to see why social class and social mobility have been studied by sociologists and social psychologists over the years. What is not clear is why clinical psychology has been slow to see this topic as worthy of close investigation. One's sense of self worth, sense of security, identity formation and sense of entitlement and agency are only a few of the intrapsychic structures often threatened or bolstered by social class levels. Class differences between groups can spark

powerful emotions that have yet to be fully examined and understood. With all these effects on the individual in a classist society such as ours, I began to wonder what happens when educational and class differences are present between individual members of the same family, particularly a parent and an adult child.

Theoretical Framework

The review of literature for this study will examine the interrelationship of social class mobility, the family system, and identity development. Literature on social class and the characteristics of people in the different social classes will be reviewed in order to gain insight into how participants may experience themselves in multiple social class environments. The relationship of race and ethnicity to class will be reviewed in order to explain the absence of a focus on race in the present study. As there were no studies found in the psychological literature that particularly address social class mobility in graduate students, social class mobility via education in other similar groups will be reviewed. Theories of acculturation will be presented and used as I believe it provides a good model to define the progression of acclimation to a new class. The section of the literature review on the family system will briefly outline the basic life cycle of the family. The concepts of organization, morphostasis/homeostasis, and morphogenesis will be discussed as it relates to adjustment and stability of the family system in order to put into perspective the way in which change affects family structure and dynamics. The separation-individuation process relates to social mobility in that the social mobility journey appears to be yet another way that the now adult child individuates and moves away from their early caregivers further defining themselves and their identity. Theories of identity formation will be presented in order to help account for possible vicissitudes

of identity experienced by the participants following education and social mobility. Identity development is important to this study because of the impact a class shift has on one's sense of self. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a section on individual and family resilience. The resilience literature puts into context the unique, against the odds struggle, of a working class individual's success in higher education while highlighting the strengths of the individual and his or her family of origin as possible aides in this process.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Social Class

The participants for this study were all self identified as coming from working class backgrounds. Deciding upon the appropriate social class term to use for this study was no easy task. To date there is no universally acknowledged phrase that is used to describe particular combinations of social, economic and political status in American society (R. Alford, Ph.D. personal communication, September, 18, 2002). The various theoretical positions on social class whether they be Marxist, Weberian or otherwise do however agree upon a few defining characteristics of social class, though the terms they use may differ. For the purposes of this study, Wright's (2000) descriptions of class and class structure will be used. On a sociological level, class involves a relationship to resources, interests in material products and the ways in which strategies for accessing financial means are guided by the need for material resources (Wright, 2000). Therefore, class is essentially a relationship between people and economic resources. The means of ownership, authority and the possession of skills and expertise separate the classes and confer power. The capitalists, or the upper class as they are referred to in popular discourse, dominate the social class ladder in that they are the owners of the means of production, they hire workers, have skills, education, expertise and credentials and possess the most authority (Wright, 2000). Workers or the working class are at the bottom of the social ladder defined by the absence of ownership of the means of production. They sell their labor, have little authority and possess minimal skills, expertise and credentials. The middle class come between the upper and the working classes. The middle class are seen as having some authority because they dominate the

working class, but in turn are controlled themselves by the upper class (Wright, 2000). The middle class possess varying degrees of skill, expertise and credentials and possess varying degrees of power and authority. Social classes in the popular culture are often referred to in terms of three levels: upper, middle and lower with varying gradations such as upper-middle class, lower class, lower-middle class, working class etc. This study will use the terms upper class and middle class to describe levels of the dominating class. Working class and lower class will be used interchangeably to describe those at the lower end of the social spectrum to accommodate the theoretical positions of the literature reviewed as well as the participants' subjective labels.

In order to understand the distinctions in values and lifestyles of the middle and working classes it is important to examine some of the literature written on class. Class, like one's ethnic or racial origin is also a culture. Class, in part, defines one's understanding of the world, the groups a person fits into, the ideas, attitudes, speech patterns, values and behavior (Langston, 1995). The seclusion created by social class isolation often binds one to the morals and values and ideals of that class. It becomes more and more difficult to look outside of one's "social box" when one is thickly surrounded by the class ideals. Class can be seen as a feature of concentric circles of context that envelope an individual. The first layer of circles consists of the nuclear family and their class values. The second layer would be the extended family. Other exterior layers are composed of the predominate neighborhood class, the school class, and the work class. If all of these circles represent the same class level, they become tight and uniform around the individual in the center. When some of the levels are composed of varying class values and structures, the circles are looser in that area thereby allowing

new ideas and values to be absorbed by the person in the center, if he or she is open and willing to accept them. The socially mobile individual inevitably creates looser circles of class context that allow the flexibility to move from one social arena to another, to expand the mental scope, explore new viewpoints, morals and values (Sorokin, 1959).

Similar to race, class is a dynamic variable that influences the way in which one constructs his or her personal and social identity. Social status or class often has a powerful effect on how we perceive ourselves and others (Ross, 1995). In the same way that culture and race have been perceived, class has also been used historically to divide society into sections of more and less desirable people. Desirability has been contingent upon such factors as financial resources, perceived intelligence, the location of one's neighborhood, and how a person expresses him or herself. A great deal of resentment, anger, misunderstanding and sadness results from the classist society that we live in. At times, class can be detected by the way in which a person presents him or herself, either through clothing or speech patterns. More often, for people like the working class graduate student, it may later become evident in the classroom or in social situations.

Sociologists argue that social inequality and the placement of an individual in a class system can be explained by either the biological propensities of human nature or by the results of social phenomena (Rossides, 1997). To put it simply, for those who are on the disadvantaged side of the coin, they either have faulty genes or were born in the wrong place at the wrong time. Psychoanalysis has not managed to escape stigmatizing the working and lower class either. In psychoanalytic theory, people have historically been divided into the analyzable and the unanalyzable depending, among other things, on their economic and social class. One particular reason stated for the unanalyzability of the

lower class is their perceived poor ego strength (Javier, 1996; Bychowski, 1970). Freud seemed to believe that his theories and treatment model would somehow have to be compromised in order to craft a form that would be applicable and amenable to the working class or lower class patient (Wachtel, 2002; Bychowski, 1970). In his writings, Freud spoke of psychoanalysis as pure gold, which would have to be mixed with an alloy to form a diluted version for the less affluent masses (Freud, 1918/1955). It is interesting that psychoanalysis and Marxism emerged around the same time in Europe in the early twentieth century because both theories sought to understand and alleviate human suffering (Moskowitz, 1996). Psychoanalysis eventually retreated from class analysis while the Marxist ideology maintained that class shapes one's psychology.

Social class embodies the obvious financial divide, but what is below the surface of this stratification in our society is what is relevant to this study and to the interest of the discipline of psychology in general. When social class is written about there is often a dichotomy of negatives and positives presented, with the negative aspects being related to the lower and working classes and the positive aspects relating to the middle and upper classes. The following review of the literature on social class will also utilize the terms upper class, working class and lower class accordingly. The term upper class will typically refer to the middle class and above. While the term lower class used in some of the articles will refer to the working class and below.

In Rossides' (1997) writings on social stratification, sociologists have outlined some of the psychological characteristics of the upper and lower classes. Members of the upper class are described as having integrated personalities and attitudes that are stable and consistent. They are able to delay gratification and thus reap the benefits of greater

personal and emotional fulfillment. Members of the lower classes are described as having unintegrated personalities in that they are less able to combine separate behaviors, identities, and personal characteristics into a coherent whole. Members of the lower class are also viewed as displaying inconsistent attitudes, are characterized as isolated and full of despair. In a fairly exhaustive list of the psychological ramifications of poverty, Lewis (1964, 1966) echoes the findings of sociological studies on class. A weak ego structure, inability to defer gratification, high maternal deprivation, external locus of control and a present time orientation are some of his conclusions regarding the characteristics of the lower class. All of these conclusions are viewed as being attributable to intrapsychic conflict.

Gallaher (1984) examined the sociological and psychological literature and compiled a comprehensive review of values held by lower and middle class individuals resulting in the development of six key points of comparison: (1) ambition versus resignation; (2) delay of gratification versus immediate gratification; (3) individual responsibility versus group responsibility; (4) high time consciousness versus low time consciousness; (5) preservation of property versus disregard for property and (6) respect for authority versus distrust of authority. Some of these points are supported by Rossides (1997) and Lewis (1964/1966) and have been mentioned previously. A few of these points most relevant to this study will be reviewed in depth.

Individuals in the lower classes are often viewed both in the literature and by the general public as having little ambition. In following the American work ethic, rewards are obtained through hard work. Ideally, those who work hard should reap the benefits of a secure and comfortable life. With this concept in mind, it also assumed that those who

are not comfortable and financially secure are, in essence, not working, or not working hard enough. Lack of ambition for the lower classes can stem from the paucity of available resources, and can also be attributed to a sense of resignation and learned helplessness, resulting from generations of stagnation or the absence of available opportunity (Bychowski, 1970). Ambition for the upper classes, on the other hand, may in fact, be the backbone of their value system. Those in the upper classes benefit from ambition and hard work, as more doors seem to open up to this section of society when their optimism and striving peaks.

An inability to delay gratification, as mentioned previously, is a popular reason cited by psychoanalysts to explain the lack of applicability of this particular type of therapy to the lower classes (Waldhorn, 1960; Terestman, Miller & Weber, 1974) and is therefore an evaluation of the lower class psyche. Ideally, the security that a life in the upper classes affords an individual allows that individual to trust that goals will be achieved and gratification will eventually be attained. The population in the lower classes, however, often have no such securities or expectations of improved life status and with little faith in the social system, have not developed that level of optimism (Reissman, 1962).

The concept of individualism is a characteristic typically valued by White, middle-class Americans (Sue & Sue, 1990). Working class parents in most cultures, on the other hand, value conformity in their children and responsibility to the group more than the autonomy that is valued by middle class parents. (Xiao, 2000; Gorman, 1998). For the lower classes and most minority cultures, the concept of the collective is valued more than individualism. When examined logically, there is strength in numbers. When

families of few means pool their resources and work together, more can be accomplished. In many situations the responsibility of the group as a whole to care for each other supercedes the need of any one individual (Sue & Sue, 1990).

As a caveat, Javier (1996) criticizes the literature on lower and middle class value distinctions and cites methodological deficiencies that often fail to take into account level of intelligence and the biases held by the examiners in these studies. Also, some authors (Ross, 1995; Baker, 1989; Granfield, 1991) who discuss the issue of social mobility only focus on working class Caucasian Americans. The added impediment of race is not calculated into the equation of the injuries, both social and psychological, created by social class. Obviously, there are exceptions to all rules.

Before resilience studies, very little seems to have been written about the positive aspects of lower class or working class families. That which strays from the norm has historically been deemed deviant and, in essence, negative. In terms of race relations, the norm of the Caucasian culture, values, and lifestyle continues to be superior or at least more valued by the majority over that of other ethnic and racial groups. Similarly, the social status of those on the higher end of the class categorizations is viewed by many, if not most, as more desirable. The obvious benefits of financial security, material wealth and social prestige are desired by most people, but this does not mean that there is no inherent good in the culture, values and lifestyle of the working and lower classes. The aforementioned authors cited who point out the benefits and essential superiority of the middle and upper classes over the lower class may be missing some important positive elements. One example is the difference of individual versus group responsibility. The basic idea of group responsibility as it relates to the lower classes implies a sense of

relatedness and cohesion that is often overlooked in the literature. Though autonomy may be more valued in middle and upper class Eurocentric psychological ideals, the idea of the collective valued more by the lower classes and by many non-European societies can be seen as a combatant for loneliness and isolation as well as a means of establishing support and community. By viewing the concept in a more favorable manner, the financial constraints of the lower classes that force many to pool their resources and work for a common good can be viewed in a more positive manner. There is a universally understood continuum of positive and negative when evaluating the benefits that higher class status brings, but these benefits by no means negate the positives that can and do result from living in the lower and working classes.

One's social class as a child predisposes him or her to have a similar social class in adulthood. Children who begin their lives in lower or working class households start out with fewer opportunities and are bestowed with less cultural capital than their middle and upper class counterparts (Rank, 2000). The permeability of social class is often linked to cultural capital and social capital. Cultural capital is described as attitudes, knowledge, skills and expectations passed on from parents to their children. The term was initially used by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his theory aimed to account for the poor school performance of children from different social classes (Bourdieu, 1983). Social capital represents one’s access to networks that enable an individual to learn and become aware of a wider scope of information not limited to their particular class boundaries. Cultural and social capital can add to a particular class’s access to opportunity. The literature presents fairly static descriptions of the values, behaviors and lifestyles of the lower and working classes. Several exceptions to these descriptions are

possible based on the possession of cultural and social capital. For example, in the midst of economic poverty can exist intelligent (both formally and informally educated) individuals who subscribe to a middle class value system. Despite their lack of financial resources, these individuals may possess the attributes of the middle class such as ambition, delay of gratification and individual responsibility that were listed earlier in the literature review. Parents in these situations may not have the immediate opportunity to improve their social class via financial means, but may still pass on their cultural and social capital to their children through the teaching of values and the provision of information. Working and lower class children in these environments have a greater chance of penetrating the social divide and reaching social mobility due to the added resources of cultural and social capital. It can also be assumed that these same children would have a less difficult time navigating the entrance into a higher social class as well as negotiating the class disparity between themselves and their families of origin because of the middle class knowledge and values that they already possess.

The dichotomized values of the working and middle class as previously noted, however, are relevant for this study when viewed as a template for the particular life circumstances of the participants in this study. For the purposes of this review, it is essential to examine the differences between the values, behaviors, and beliefs of the classes, keeping in mind that once an adult child enters into the middle or upper class, he or she will inevitably adopt some of these class driven attributes that will most likely vary greatly from those held by the working class family of origin. Class differences have the potential to impact upon the ability of a parent or family member to understand and relate to an adult child in a different social class as well as an adult child's ability to understand

and incorporate the needs of their family members in a different social class (Baker, 1989; Gorman 1998).

Social Class Mobility

Social class mobility for the purpose of this dissertation denotes the process of moving from one social stratum into another by means of education. For the participants in this study, it is assumed that they have moved from their working class origins, vertically, to a middle or upper class social position. Sorokin (1959) who published a book on social mobility stated that the process of moving up or down the social ladder requires people to change their frame of mind and their reactions. Inherent in this class shift is the idea that social mobility results in increased flexibility and versatility of human behavior. Sorokin (1959) posits, "take a man of any occupation who has followed it for a lifetime… he will necessarily exhibit the narrow-mindedness, idiosyncrasies, and l' esprit de corps of his social status more conspicuously than a man who has passed through several different positions" (p. 510). The narrow-mindedness the author speaks of refers more to the state of having a limited scope of readily accessible knowledge and interaction, more so than the more derogatory concept of being closed minded. With Sorokin's comment in mind there are certain areas of information and interaction available to the socially mobile individual, and in the case of the present study, to the socially mobile adult child, that the typically immobile family of origin often do not have access to. With the increased flexibility of behaviors, thinking patterns, morals and values comes increased mental strain stemming from the need to enhance one's versatility (Sorokin, 1959). For a working class student in academia, particularly those with little

cultural or social capital, daily life proves to be a constant effort to acculturate and adapt to new middle class rules of engagement.

Social mobility by means of education has the potential to create great triumphs as well as painful conflicts within an individual and a family depending upon the psyche and adaptability of the individuals involved. It is no secret that those from the working class, as with people of color and minorities in general, have both positive and negative stereotypes attributed to them. Working class individuals are not first and foremost considered to be intellectuals, whether this assumption is due to classism or the history of inadequate education provided for the lower classes or a combination of both, is uncertain. Though becoming an intellectual by all accounts appears to be a desired state of being for some people, in the situation of an adult child from a working class family, becoming an intellectual may mean leaving one's family of origin behind in many ways. Socially mobile intellectuals not only encounter the day to day classism that other men and women encounter, but there is, at times, contempt from people within their own class of origin for being different. The contempt results from the idea that as an intellectual, one conforms to the upper or middle class ideal and essentially becomes one of "them" which, for some, signifies a betrayal (Ross, 1995; Gorman, 1989; Baker, 1989) and a loss.

Race and Class

It is well known that minority groups are represented disproportionately among the lower classes. Poverty statistics for African Americans and Latino Americans are nearly three times as high as those of Caucasian Americans (Proctor & Dalaker, 2002). In addition to statistics, the history of racism in American culture, combined with enduring

stereotypes have infiltrated common thinking in such a way that oftentimes poverty is viewed as synonymous to ethnic minorities. Both class and culture are significant aspect of one's psychological makeup. In the same manner in which differences in race can produce significant sources of external and internal conflict, so can differences in class and the combination of both. Constantine (2002) states that by considering race, class and gender separately one fails to adequately reflect people's complexity and full life experiences. Yet without a full examination of each contributing factor in isolation, it becomes difficult to learn what each brings into the collective mix. This study does not deny the powerful social, personal and interpersonal influences of race and culture in social class divisions. The goal for this study, however, is to isolate class in a heterogeneous population in order to see how this particular variable is experienced by all involved. It is understood that any individual's experience with regard to social mobility will be infused with and influenced by cultural and racial experiences in our society. This study aims to discover whether or not the experience of social class mobility will be more similar than different across race due to the powerful effects of oppression and the tremendous strength required by all individuals in the working class to become upwardly socially mobile.

Social Mobility Studies

The working class parents of upwardly mobile children have vastly diverse reactions to their children's success (Piorkowski, 1983, Billson & Terry, 1982). Similarly, the upwardly mobile child experiences a wide range of emotions and reactions. Gorman (1998) conducted a fairly comprehensive study of social class and parental attitudes toward their children's education. The author examined two attitudes working class

parents exhibited regarding the idea of their children advancing their educational status. Parents either fell into the category of *conformity* or *resistance*. Conformity describes the manner in which a parent accepts and encourages an adult child's advancement. Resistance represents an oppositional stance to the adult child's desire to attain an education. Gorman's (1998) results showed that parents who encountered the greatest amounts of "hidden injuries of class" were the most likely to resist higher education for their children. These parents who had suffered discrimination and had been made to feel inferior because of their occupations and social status often denigrated the institution their critics represented, as well as the critics themselves. The pain, humiliation and fear these resistant parents held on to was transferred to their children under the guise of protection. Resistant parents tended to justify their actions and beliefs by claiming to want to spare their children from having to adapt to academia, a life that was alien to them. For these parents their critics, as mentioned earlier, were often more educated superiors at work or in their communities. Parents shown to be resistant of education disrespected formally educated people and in essence, education itself (Gorman, 1998). The anger and frustration these working class individuals experienced toward representatives of that social class who mistreated them was then generalized to the middle class sociological stratum as a whole.

It is not difficult to see why parents in this situation would discourage their children from adopting the values, behaviors and lifestyle of the middle class. The Gorman (1998) study shows that it was at the hands of these, middle class, individuals that so much pain and humiliation had been experienced, which begs the question; Why would a parent want his or her child to become one of "them"? For the parents in this

study to entertain the thought of losing their children to the middle class would raise a host of questions and challenges to that parent, forcing them to confront their own fears aggression and feelings of powerlessness for the sake of securing their children's futures.

On the positive side of Gorman's (1989) study lie the conformists. These working class parents experienced some social indignities, though significantly fewer, and still managed to encourage their children to achieve through education. These parents were able to forgo the pain of these social insults and encourage their own children to forage out into the very society that may have denigrated them. Though these parents did not appear to be as proactive as their middle class counterparts, they did display significantly fewer denigrating ideas regarding education and the educated.

Gorman's (1998) study does present fairly stark contrasts of possible parental responses in education. What is missing or is subsumed under one of the two categories are those parents who are pseudo-conformists who may send mixed messages to their children about their participation in higher education and academia. Those parents who are wholeheartedly and genuinely enthusiastic and proud of their child's educational pursuits are also missing in this study. Nevertheless, some insightful information can be gleaned from Gorman’s research.

Social mobility by means of education presents not only academic and familial stressors but impediments to psychological development as well. Baker (1989), Dews and Law (1995) in their anthologies of vignettes discuss both the support and sabotage provided by the lower class or working class parents of college and graduate school students. Utilizing a self psychological perspective, Baker (1989) examined his clinical experience with 300 Caucasian working class college students. He found that the working

class students entered college equipped with limited social skills and inadequate educational backgrounds. Many of the students were ill prepared to cope with the stressors of academia and sought outside sources in the form of friends, family, romantic partners and professors, to serve as selfobjects. These sources often failed to provide soothing and comfort and were unable to help maintain adequate self-esteem in the subjects studied. Baker (1989) surmised that the students' inability to locate viable selfobjects to meet legitimate needs caused them to suffer a derailment in psychological development often resulting in what the author described as a psychological collapse under the emotional strain of the new academic environment.

A working class child's entry into college may engender competitive feelings from parents and other family members (Baker, 1989). Baker (1989) discovered that fathers, in particular, may experience their child's success and advancement as a narcissistic injury and not as a family triumph. Baker (1989) refers to this narcissistic injury in a manner that is reminiscent of an Oedipal victory by a child superceding the parent and coveting the success and prosperity which is meant for that parent. Atkins (1970) states that the vast majority of psychological literature on the Oedipus complex ignores the component part of the patricidal urges of the child, as well as the filicidal urges of the parent. There is a level of "pain and destructiveness associated with the inevitable succession of generations" (Atkins, 1970 p. 866). The succession of generations in many ways embodies the process of the Oedipus complex. Assuming responsibility for ones own life is a symbolic act of parricide in that one must destroy and denounce the old ideas taught by one's parents in order to make room for the new (Loewald, 2000). It seems as though many of Baker's subjects had parents who felt

threatened or jilted by the child's denouncement or destruction of the working class lifestyle and values learned growing up which, theoretically, ignited the filicidal urges of the parent.

In the Baker (1989) study it was also discovered that working class mothers tended to experience the move toward higher education more as a loss than as a source of competition. Mother's feared that the lure of the middle class and of the educated world would change their children in fundamental ways and essentially take them away. Upon realizing these parental fears and threats, working class students are faced with coping with these unexpected and certainly complicated situations. Confronting these difficulties can strain an individual's ability to maintain a coherent sense of self. The split between the new middle class academic culture and the old working class culture tests loyalties, one's identity, and one's goals. Maintaining a level of balance and cohesion becomes essential to avoid the threat of fragmentation (Baker, 1989).

Dews and Law, (1995) have edited a book entitled *This Fine Place So Far From Home: Voices of Academics from the Working Class*. The book is composed of candid and often poignant, first person narratives of a racially and culturally mixed group of socially mobile academics sent in from around the United States. Many of the examples in the volume affirm the findings in the current literature regarding the struggles the socially mobile face with identity, family and society. In the afterward, Dews (1995) sums up the experience of many of the socially mobile contributors when he states, "Academics from the working class may never find a true home in either world…" (p. 333). His words echo the pain of displacement and the ongoing struggle many socially

mobile individuals experience as they strive to consolidate aspects of the working class self and aspects of the essentially middle class academic self.

Snarey and Valliant (1985) looked at 278 inner city men of European descent in an attempt to locate the ego defense mechanisms correlated with upward social mobility. They posited that the types of defenses an individual utilizes contributes significantly to explaining why there are differences between people in their responses to similar stressful situations. The study worked with an existing longitudinal sample from a prior study designed to understand the origins of juvenile delinquency. Snarey and Valliant (1985) used the existing data from the non-delinquent control (which includes information about their parents), administered new assessments and evaluated the offspring of this control group. Overall they were able to examine the data from three generations of subjects. Among other assessments and indices given to the subjects that obtained information on social class, rate and trajectory of social mobility, IQ, parent child relationship, environmental strengths, family stability and general mental health, the subjects were given a two-hour interview designed to assess ego coping mechanisms.

The results pertaining to defense mechanisms were taken from the second generation of subjects in the sample. In their study, the authors identified intellectualization, altruism and anticipation as the most significant defense mechanisms that corresponded to upward mobility. Intellectualization was linked to the successful resolution of difficulties in the workplace. Subjects who intellectualized used the defense in an adaptive manner to help protect themselves from exploitation, and force coworkers to maintain accountability for their own behavior. Anticipation allowed these upwardly mobile individuals to utilize insight in planning ways to counteract stress. Finally, the

defense of altruism aided the subjects in maintaining a cohesive self. By helping others to achieve and giving back to their community and those around them, these subjects were better able to maintain a sense of continuity of self and relationship with one's past. This study appears to highlight the need for socially mobile individuals to possess certain characteristics, in this case three identified defenses, that allow them to navigate situations that may be initially alien and stressful to them due to the unfamiliarity of the new social class. The defense of altruism is notable because it seems to allow the individual to make a bridge between the two classes that fosters the connection and hopefully the eventual integration of the two. The results also imply a need to maintain a connection to working class origins.

Roberts and Rosenwald (2001) studied social mobility and identity formation in 15 male and female current and former first generation undergraduate students whose parents' highest level of education was high school or less. In addition to 12 Americans of European descent, two African Americans and one Asian American were included in the study. Researchers conducted three sessions of open ended interviews aimed at examining three key topics: 1) how relationships with family, friends and community had shaped the pursuit of higher education; 2) how the participant experienced the move to a new academic environment and 3) how each individual made and managed occupational choices.

The authors uncovered themes of relatedness and career development in the data. The theme of relatedness produced the richest data and was broken down into parent, sibling, hometown friendship, and middle and upper class school peer categories. The findings of the study demonstrated the varied influences that social mobility had on

family relationships and social interactions. Many lower class students spoke of the lack of validation from their families for their academic pursuits and struggles. They often found themselves experiencing an inability to appreciate and identify with their families and communities of origin when the differences between them and their newly discovered world of academia collided. Many students reported feeling estranged from their families and communities of origin and misunderstood by them. The lack of validation, healthy idealization and identification with those from their own class of origin manifested itself in identity instability.

The study acknowledges the focus on negative aspects of upward mobility. They note that through the process, some students demonstrated remarkable levels of independence and responsibility as useful coping mechanisms. Some students described themselves as individuals with stellar work ethics and a solid appreciation for achievement and hard work. The distance and difficulties experienced between the subjects and their parents was often made more problematic due to the closeness that had been established before college. Roberts and Rosenwald (2001) found that those students who had been particularly close to their parents prior to leaving for college experienced a more profound sense of loss stemming from the disparity created by their education.

In criticism of their own study, the researchers note the youth of their participants (age range 19-27 years) and the volatility that characterizes an adolescent or young adult's description of others, particularly parents. They also acknowledge the focus on social class at the expense of noting the significance of race, gender, ethnicity and geographical region. The results of this study indicate the presence of feelings of being misunderstood as well as an estrangement from family and community that the present

study seeks to evaluate in its participants. Significant differences between the Roberts and Rosenwald (2001) study and the present study will be the focus on older subjects who have completed a higher level of education. With these differences it will be interesting to see how the struggles and possible resolutions to the disparity between the class of origin and current social class of the subjects compare to those in the Roberts and Rosenwald (2001) study.

Acculturation

Class mobility entails a move to a different social class, that when examined carefully, has all the characteristics of another culture. Culture and in many ways, class, both consist of implicit and explicit behaviors and patterns that connect one to a collective of people who share a common heritage, history, geographic region, language, rituals, values, childrearing practices, kinship relationships, societal roles and belief's (Veroff & Goldberger, 1995). In keeping with this analogy, acculturation, the process of adjusting to a nonnative culture, shares some similarities to class mobility. Acculturation involves changes in identity, values, behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes. Berry's (1995) model of acculturation combines two levels: population and individual. At the population level the person encounters and copes with the changes in the ecological, social, cultural, institutional, economical and political area. At the individual level the acculturating person deals with changes in behavior, identity, values, traits and attitudes. Such changes often, engender a type of distress referred to as culture shock or acculturative stress (Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Berry, 1995). Garza-Guerrero (1974) stated that culture shock in its true sense results in psychological stress in the form of mourning and the vicissitudes of identity. Berry (1995) stated that the anxiety and stress of adapting to an unknown

culture has adverse effects on some people by destabilizing their psychic organization. Berry (1995) went on to echo Garza-Guerrero's (1974) belief when he explained that when individuals are stripped of a familiar social order and cultural norms, a sense of loss ensues. The stress of acculturation can then result in feelings of marginality, alienation and identity confusion (Berry, 1995).

Garza-Guerrero's (1974) focus on mourning and loss as it relates to culture shock has relevance for the population of working class socially mobile individuals as well. The abandoned class and the loss of objects of one's love within that class are more profound than one may think. Even in situations in which people dislike much of the culture they are leaving, mourning and disorientation occurs as the adaptation to the new commences (Baker, 1989). Introjection is an adaptive coping device used in mourning. The person takes the lost individual or entity inside the self, which offsets the pain of permanent separation. With this in mind, a successful resolution for mourning the old culture is integrating the two within the self (Garza-Guerrero, 1974). This conclusion that Garza-Guerrero (1974) makes regarding culture shock is very similar to Baker's (1989) ideas of avoiding fragmentation when confronted with entering a new social class and will most likely be applicable to the population in this study as they navigate the task of social mobility.

Family Dynamics

This next section of text will focus on family dynamics in order to provide the background and set the foundation for understanding the influences of class mobility on the family system and the individuals within it. A family is a living entity that expands and contracts according to its need for growth and adjustment. The movement of

expanding and contracting implies flexibility, which is essential to accommodate such events as a new baby, relocating cross-country, the launching of an adult child, or a death. The life cycle of a family begins with the coupling of two individuals from separate families who come together to form a union that will (for some) produce children and a new family unit. Adolescence brings about the beginning of the launching period in which the child starts to move away from the original family nucleus and will eventually couple and form a new family, to start the cycle anew. The basic functions that govern the development and stability of a family have been described by Steinglass (1987) as organization, morphostasis and morphogenesis. All three of these concepts appear relevant to families in general, regardless of class, race or ethnicity.

Families are composed of fairly distinct units that organize themselves utilizing a system of boundaries and hierarchies. Internal and external boundaries exist in families that serve purposes of protection, coalition, nurturance, and the maintenance of order and stability in the system. Hierarchies are also delineated with these boundaries and serve to maintain organization, but more importantly, they help define the function of the various family subsystems (Steinglass, 1987). In many nuclear families, parents maintain the highest level in the hierarchy with a mixture of extended family members and/or eldest children coming next, depending upon the family culture and tradition. Once organization is established, balance and stability must be created and maintained. Morphostasis in family systems theory describes the ability to maintain stability and adequate functioning when the system is challenged by internal and external disturbances (Steinglass, 1987). Families are remarkably adept at maintaining constancy despite the vicissitudes of the outer and inner world.

The term family homeostasis, introduced by Don Jackson (1957) is another way to describe the family's propensity to maintain balance. Optimal family functioning exists within the known parameters of a family's experience. Thus, homeostatic balance seeks to maintain the status quo, at times, despite its contraindication. Jackson (1957) emphasized the negative aspects of family homeostasis as derived from his clinical work with psychiatric patients and their families. Homeostasis is driven by both conscious and unconscious wishes. Unconscious wishes of parents can influence children's behavior (Johnson & Szurek, 1952). For instance, a parent may harbor poorly integrated feelings related to forbidden impulses. He or she may unwittingly send messages to a child to act out these impulses, thus vicariously gaining gratification through the child's acting out behavior. Homeostatic balance in a family could mean, for example, bolstering the nurturing system at home to counteract a child's emotionally taxing school environment, or it could mean parental disapproval of a child's popularity at school because the parent would have to then cope with his or her own unmet needs of recognition and appreciation. The comfort and security derived from the familiarity of sameness is powerfully enticing. Homeostasis in a family system is both vital and destructive depending upon the purposes of its use. The rigidity of a family's maintenance of homeostasis is often dependent upon each family member's tolerance for ambiguity, change and adjustment. When fear is low, homeostasis is put into effect in a positive manner to combat imbalance and incorporate change. When fear escalates, so does desperation, which leads to inappropriate responses. It is, however, erroneous to regard homeostatic mechanisms in a family as the sole cause of pathology and inappropriate

functioning. What an understanding of homeostasis does elucidate are the contributing factors, stemming from the family system as a whole.

The concept of morphogenesis entered the family systems literature when it was discovered that the focus on morphostasis and homeostasis relegated a family to an entity that sees any stimulus or change as noxious then mobilizes themselves furiously to maintain the status quo. Guided by the premise of the family life cycle, morphogenesis focuses on change and growth over time, and the energy that fuels these changes (Steinglass, 1987). Morphogenesis enables a family to mobilize the energy and resources to realign or restructure itself to accommodate or defend against agents of destabilization. Organization, morphostasis/homeostasis and morphogenesis are the primary mechanisms families use to adjust to the ups, downs and general changes of life. Each stage in the family life cycle, whether it be marriage, birth, or the launching of a child all represent changes and challenges that require organization and adaptation. The launching stage of the family life cycle, which is particularly relevant to this study represents key challenges of exits from and entries into the family system (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). As adult children leave the nuclear family unit, in-laws and grandchildren may enter in. Another way to conceptualize the exits and entries into the system is in terms of social influences. As adult children leave the confines of their parent's homes, for instance to attend college, they are exposed to a wealth of new information and opportunities. For many young adults, entrance into college exposes them not only to new academic and intellectual knowledge and challenges, but to varying cultures, ethnicities, and social class levels not always seen in one's environment growing up (Baker, 1989). These influences have the capacity to be absorbed and incorporated particularly due to the

newness and excitement of the initial exposure. Launching a child into a university academic environment predisposes the family to have to prepare for the entries and exits of the changing identity resulting from this exposure.

A family's propensity toward homeostasis and the maintenance of the status quo ideally eliminates confusion, envy, resentment and the like. When a family member chooses to break through the status quo and attain a position in a higher social class, a homeostatic imbalance may occur resulting in emotional consequences. Successful achievement in an individual with a working class background can result in increased differentiation from that individual's family of origin. Regardless of an individual's college experience, growth occurs in adulthood as the young adult begins to separate and define his or her own identity. This process of separation, individuation and differentiation can be accepted, rejected or simply tolerated by the family system. By virtue of an association with a higher class, new interests, points of view and value systems are often adopted by the socially mobile academic. Children who have surpassed their families then face the challenge of continuing their ability to interact authentically with their working class families of origin. Feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, disdain, can characterize the relationship between the children and their families of origin in a variety of ways. Children who move past their parent's social class commonly experience a feeling of disloyalty (Ross, 1995). They are no longer part of their original class and have moved up to a class level that typically looks down on their social class of origin. There is often a desire to want to leave their meager origins along with the shame associated with this desire (Ross, 1995).

The ideal solution to the vast changes in the family structure of the socially mobile individual would seem to be a successful accommodation and acceptance of the individual's academic strivings and changing identity. This would require the family system to avoid seeing the difference as a powerful loss or an unwelcomed change, but as a positive restructuring of the ever growing and ever changing family organism.

Separation-Individuation

The process of social mobility as experienced within a family can also be examined in terms of the separation-individuation process. "The separation-individuation phase is characterized by a steady increase in awareness of the separateness of the self and the other which coincides with the origins of a sense of self, of true object relationships, and of awareness of reality in the outside world" (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975, p.48). Separation-individuation seems to be a point of extreme growth for the young child but there is a risk involved. The stage of symbiosis is rich with security and familiarity. Young children must risk this safety to individuate. They venture into the unknown with one foot within the union to test the waters. They then enter and retract from this new uncharted world as anxieties rise and mastery is gained. Once the fear of the outside is contained, the child is free to leave the symbiotic union for more interesting objects and interactions on the outside (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975).

Mahler and her associates (1975) discovered that the process of separation and individuation between a mother and her infant child can culminate in a number of occurrences. The child's eagerness to engage the world around him can be both accepted and encouraged by the mother/parents. The parental object can serve as a proud cheerleader and comforting resource when the adventuresome child wanders back to

home base for refueling. Another scenario casts the mother as a jaded individual who experiences her child's adventuresome roaming as a cold rejection. Feeling this blow powerfully, she responds with frustration and anger, consequently pushing her child away. The child's success as an independent entity causes the parent to feel ineffectual at best and, in extremes, enraged. In yet another response, the mother may refuse to let the child explore the outside world in a desperate, selfishly motivated attempt to maintain the symbiotic bond (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975).

One can speculate that if the parents of socially mobile children focus on homeostasis/symbiosis in their adult children in a way that discourages venturing outside of the social class of origin, these same parents would likely attempt to interfere in the process of social exploration or reject the child for his or her traitorous pursuits of a higher class. Similarly the adult children could have any combination of counter reactions which may include but are not limited to distancing, enmeshment, anxiety and/or confusion. A more successful navigation of the social mobility process within the family would result in the parent acting as a secure base as the adult child moves back and forth between the two classes, eventually adopting a posture of integration with a combined sense of mastery and confidence. The task for this study will be to ascertain from the subject his or her parent's/family's reaction to the move into academia and an elevated social class, then discover what effect the parent's/family's reactions had on him or her.

Identity Formation

Social mobility has a profound effect on one's ego identity (Roberts & Rosenwald, 2001). Identity formation, which begins in childhood with introjection and projection, is a process guided by social interactions (Erikson, 1959/1980). Introjection

and projection emerge from the mutuality between the mother and the child. Only a safe experience of mutuality will allow the child to gain a sense of himself and an other. Children throughout development identify with part objects of their parents. These part objects could be body parts, roles or capabilities both in the realm of reality and fantasy. Children initially favor certain part objects because of how they gratify infantile fantasies and drives. Early childhood identifications are sorted through, accepted, discarded and absorbed into a new configuration that forms a unique identity. The elements of this identity finally converge in adolescence. Thus, the process of forming one's identity begins with what we take in from our primary objects and early environment, and culminates in an understanding of who we are and how we are unique and separate from others.

Identity feels crystallized to an individual at various stages in growth, but new developmental demands force a person to come to terms with the need to incorporate more into their identity, thus changing it. The new developmental demands are also interpreted by the individual as demands from the environment to change. This allows one to become aware of the social value of an identity in a way that they learn to appreciate what is socially appropriate. At the end of adolescence Erikson (1959/1980) states that identity needs to be fairly conflict free. He gave this stage of psychosocial development the title, *Identity vs. Identity Diffusion*. Attainment of Erikson's ego identity results in stable self-definition. Lopez (1989) in a study on family dynamics added to the interpretation of Erikson's identity theory stating that parental influence is instrumental to encourage the adolescent in the struggle between identifying with others who may be perceived as both perfect and powerful, and with the natural inclination to express one's

uniqueness and revel in the power derived from successful individualism (Lopez, 1989). It is the attainment of successful individualism that allows one to progress to Erikson's next stage of *Intimacy vs. Isolation.*

The development of an identity separate from one's early caregivers presumes a movement toward autonomy. As one advances past the stage of adolescence, the influences of a lifetime of living in a family is joined by the influences from one's environment. The social influences of one's environment are considered by developmental psychologists to have more of an influence on the development of the self than was initially believed (Raskin, 2002). As the relationship to family and environment fluctuate throughout the life span, the effect these influences have on the sense of self fluctuates also. It is an inevitable occurrence to experience conflicts between the family's early influences on identity and the images and messages received from the environment about who one should be. The influences of the environment emerge in the form of peers, education, the workplace, as well as general information coming from the society at large. Identity consolidation is the process of constructing an adult identity that is grounded and positive (Pals, 1999). Accomplishing this task, entails the process of evaluating the experiences and reactions to new adult roles and responsibilities. This process helps to focus on how aspects of these new encounters, and the adjustments in self required to master them, fit with existing personality traits, values, capabilities; one's overall identity.

Identity is often divided into themed parts defining particular aspects of self. The psychological literature delineates not only an ego identity, but racial identity, cultural identity, family identity and social identity among many. Racial identity development

theories and the studies that have emerged from them have provided a valuable means of understanding the progression of identity formation that is not only guided by internal, familial, and environmental processes but by sociopolitical influences as well (Sue & Sue, 1990). In the studies of racial identity development by Cross (1971) and Jackson (1975), progressive stages have become a common way to describe the process of identity transformation in minority populations, however, research on social class identity has yet to be seen in the psychological literature.

Granfield's (1991) experience with working class students at an Ivy League law school indicated that students often entered the academic institution with an intact sense of pride regarding their social origins. Students credited their class background as a primary motivating factor for pursuing a law degree. Once fully ensconced in academia, students became painfully aware of the quality of difference their lower class origins represented and a sense of shame ensued (Granfield, 1991; Baker, 1989; Roberts & Rosenwald, 2001). The recognition that one has entered an alien world and are second class citizens within it challenges identity in a profound manner. Adopting the middle class values and behaviors of academia become a survival tool needed to succeed in the competitive, intellectual environment (Law, 1995). The challenge for these students then is to successfully integrate those salient aspects of themselves from their lower class origins with the new aspects of their identity acquired from middle class academia. Students are further challenged when this new consolidated self interacts with the family of origin. Some students may be able to present their consolidated social identity to their families with little resistance. Other students may be confronted by family members who

find the middle class aspects of self too diverse and experience the consolidation as a loss of their loved ones (Baker, 1989).

Individual and Family Resilience

The resilience literature puts into context the unique, against the odds struggle, of a working class individual's success in higher education, while highlighting the strengths of the individual and family of origin as aides in this process. Resilience can be described as the ability to bounce back from adversity. It is the capability of a person, organization or group of people to experience trauma and hardship on an emotional, social, political, cognitive, and or physical level and maintain the ability to persevere and emerge in the same place or in an elevated position. Resilience implies a set of risk factors to overcome as well as the mobilization of skills to tackle adversity.

Resilience gained respect and attention with research and theory geared toward children as products of dysfunctional environments. The study in Kauai done by Emmy Werner and her colleagues (1993) is one of the longest and most widely cited research projects on this topic, to date. In this and other studies, children who faced a host of risk factors that created adverse situations including but not limited to parental stress, poverty and community violence, were studied to see if they could overcome these risks, emerge fairly well-adjusted and lead relatively normal adult lives (Werner, 1993; Freitas & Downey, 1998). Groups of characteristics and personality features that seemed to help each child adapt to the adversity were identified as key components in the psychological and environmental makeup of a resilient individual.

Werner (1993) described these adaptive traits as protective factors and discovered clusters of them in resilient children. From all the information gathered, five separate

clusters were established. Cluster 1 consists of characteristics related to the child's temperament. These include the individual's easygoing disposition and ability to attract caring people and elicit positive responses from them. Cluster 2 describes the process of acquiring useful skills and realistically adapting them to educational and career plans. The characteristics in Cluster 3 are related to the outcome of competent parenting styles. Parents who created a warm, yet authoritative and structured environment contributed to their child's resilience by bolstering their self-esteem and sense of competence. Cluster 4 included the presence of supportive adults in the child's life who acted as mentors, confidants or surrogate parents. The last cluster consists of the opening of opportunities in adulthood for marriage, acquiring an education, job, or military service (Werner, 1993).

Adding to the body of literature on individual resilience, researchers began to study family resilience to examine how a group of people can, in a state of intersubjectivity, create a system of behaviors and beliefs that act as a buffer against adversity. Hawley and DeHaan (1996) have identified a number of commonalities in the definitions of individual and family resilience. Just as it is with individuals, family resilience is seen as a characteristic or ability that arises in the face of hardship. It is a process by which families take an active role in gathering their skills and ideas then executing them to adapt successfully to adverse situations. Resiliency implies that a family possesses the ability to return to the original or improved state after facing a stressful situation; in the same way that a rubber ball bounces back after it hits a wall, possibly scratched but still intact. In this process it may not be necessary for each individual to have the same type or level of resilient characteristics; instead, each family

member has the opportunity to posses any one or more traits that when combined with those of another member create a well oiled machine of resilience.

Resilience is a necessary component to the successful endurance of living in a lower social class and having lower socioeconomic resources. Both family and individual resilience also appear to play a part in an individual's social mobility. Limited resources and a lower position in the class hierarchy can be considered factors that may put an individual at risk of not succeeding in higher education. The financial cost of obtaining an education as well as the cultural capital need to succeed in higher level academia both may prove to be barriers for the working class individual. An adult child from a working class family would need to possess the talent and drive necessary to beat the odds and succeed.

Summary

The literature examined here, at first glance, may appear to have a disparate quality, but when examined together actually contributes vital information to the topic of this study. The difficulty inherent in researching class mobility from a psychological perspective is the apparent lack of information and interest in the field. Nevertheless, this researcher believes that a study of this nature deserves attention. The literature cited reinforces the idea that the process of social mobility via education, for some, can be an emotionally difficult experience for the socially mobile individual as well as for his or her family members. It is hoped that an examination of the narratives of the participants in this study will provide more information that may fill in some of the gaps existing in the literature. From this literature review, however, the following four research questions have been identified and will be used to guide the process of data analysis:

1) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's identity?
2) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's relationships with family members?
3) What effect does social mobility have on the participant's identity?
4) What effect does social mobility have on the participant's relationships with family members?

Significance of the Study

Though the intensity may vary depending on culture, maintaining ties to one's family remains important throughout the life cycle. Rossides (1997) stated that working class families have more frequent and more intense kinship relationships than families in other classes. The significance of our early relationships to the family of origin has been emphasized in many theories of human development. The clinical literature on development and family systems theories have helped us to define and understand the adult child's continuing relationship with primary caregivers. As children grow and mature, attachments to their parents change accordingly. One's identity, which can be comprised of a family identity, racial/cultural identity, academic identity, and social identity, becomes increasingly influenced by the outside world. When an aspect of identity is significantly altered, as in one's academic or intellectual identity, this may affect other areas of the self, for instance, how one chooses to communicate and relate to the outside world. Additionally, knowledge changes the way one views various aspects of one's environment. When we think differently we often behave differently, which

becomes the observable aspect of this change. How one identifies and copes with these changes has implications for self-understanding and clinical treatment.

In addition to discovering the impact of class and educational differences on family relationships and an individual's self concept, it is hoped that a study such as this will prove useful for clinicians who treat the working class, socially mobile patient. The particular conflicts these patients present are unique and challenging on several different levels. Information produced by this study would prove useful in university settings as well. By highlighting the particular struggles of this population, universities could ready themselves to implement support systems designed to work with these issues, whether the support be in the form of mentors who are more capable of dealing with these particular students or with counseling staff. Finally, it is hoped that this study will promote self-exploration and self-understanding in socially mobile individuals and their families. There is often a wall of silence that shrouds the frustration, conflict and pain that these students experience in their transition and adaptation to the graduate school academic environment and then the middle class.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Participants

A theoretical sampling method was used for this study, which dictates that the researcher chooses and examines the interviews of participants who could contribute to the evolution of the theories the data are intended to develop. As illustrated in Table 1, the research sample consists of 4 men and 9 women of varying ethnic, racial and cultural origins who grew up in working class households. Several well-known local and national universities chosen through personal connections and as a result of an internet search of graduate university alumni associations were contacted by e-mail, fax and traditional mail with a description of the study and a request for access to the names and addresses of recent doctoral graduates (Appendix A). The two consenting universities were then sent recruitment letters already sealed in envelopes, which were stamped and labeled with the researcher's return address (Appendix B). The university officials addressed the letters to the graduates and mailed them from their facility. Eleven participants were generated in this manner. The remaining two participants were recruited through word of mouth generated by a friend, and a colleague, and were mailed a recruitment letter. The inclusion criteria for the study were determined as follows:

- Participants must identify themselves as having grown up in a working class/low income household
- Parents of each subject can not have earned a college degree
- Participants must have completed their Ph.D. degree
- Participants will have graduated no more than three years ago
- Participants must be employed in their field of study

These individuals were self-identified as working class based on answers to questions regarding their interpretation and experience of the family's economic situation growing up, their parent's occupations, and of their perceptions of their family's placement in the social stratum of class. The parents of these individuals were identified as people who did not possess a college degree in order to create greater disparity of education between the participants and their early caregivers. The participants were determined to have completed all of their graduate education requirements, thus earning a Ph.D. Former graduate students were chosen with the idea that some families and individuals perceive graduate education to be extraneous and extravagant. The decision to select subjects with a Ph.D. degree was generated from the literature on working class and low income parents who had a more difficult time understanding and approving of their child's educational pursuits when the focus of the studies appeared to have non-tangible utility in the workforce, unlike a law or medical degree (Baker, 1989). Participants who had graduated from their programs no more than three years prior to the interview were chosen with the hope that interviewing people who had graduated within a three-year time span would enable the person to still have access to some of the memories and affect connected to their decision to attend graduate school. Choosing participants with less time since graduating was also done with the intention of capturing the family's initial adjustment to the class mobility. Participants were also self-identified as having a stable position working in their field of study in order to ensure that each had utilized their degree in order to increase their earning potential, thereby moving them into an elevated social status.

As mentioned in the literature review, nearly all of the social mobility research studies to date have examined Caucasian men and women. Though this study could have focused solely on minority men and women, the goal was to isolate and focus on the issue of class specifically in a multicultural sample. This study aims to discover whether both men and women from the working class share certain experiences of moving through higher education and dealing with the changes that this journey has on their identity and family relationships irrespective of race, and ethnicity. Notwithstanding the powerful influences of race and culture and the prejudice and discrimination present in our society, these individuals continue to share a common characteristic of working class status that brings with it certain characteristics, discrimination, struggles, and triumphs that can be very similar.

Instruments

Each participant recruited was sent a letter advertising the study and requesting their participation (Appendix B). All participants were administered a brief phone screening by the researcher to determine eligibility for the study based on the inclusion criteria (Appendix C). The screening also ascertained the subject's age, ethnicity, and employment status. Before the actual interview, each person was mailed a consent form, which outlined the general purpose of the study and specified consent to audiotape the interview (Appendix D). The participants were also sent a short self-report checklist that was used to categorize their subjective membership to a social class level (Appendix E). Each person was then administered a semi-structured interview (Appendix F).

Procedures

Participation was on a voluntary basis, therefore no compensation, monetary or otherwise was offered. Based upon the participant's geographical proximity to the researcher, interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. A total of four face-to-face interviews were conducted and the remaining nine were conducted over the phone. Face-to-face interviews took place at the participant's home or office as determined by the participant. Participants interviewed by phone were instructed to choose a room that was quiet and free of distractions from others. The interviewer conducted each phone interview in a private room in her home behind a closed door. Each interview was tape recorded and notes were also taken during the interview to guide prompts and ensure the thoroughness of questioning. Following the interview, a short debriefing session occurred to question the participants about their feelings regarding the subject matter and to ascertain any emotional disturbances the questions may have caused. The interviewer possessed a list of therapy referral sources in the event that a participant requested such services; however, no referrals were requested.

Verbatim transcriptions were made from the audiotaped interviews. Each interview tape was labeled with a participant number and sent to a transcriptionist hired by the researcher. All transcripts were then double-checked by the researcher to assure accuracy and any needed corrections were made. The data were coded in a sentence-by-sentence fashion according to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory methodology and the resulting themes were examined and analyzed. Computer based qualitative research software entitled NUD*IST 6 (N6) by QSR International was used to code and assist in the process of data analysis.

Rationale for the Use of a Semi-Structured Interview and Qualitative Design

Throughout the introduction and literature review sections of this dissertation, it has been noted that a psychodynamically-based inquiry into the experience of working class, socially mobile graduate students does not appear to exist in the literature. More specifically, the literature does not focus on the subjective experience of this particular population nor on their continuing adult relationships with their families of origin. Given this absence of information in the literature, the decision to utilize a qualitative, grounded theory research design was made to capture a wide range of first hand experiences providing detailed narratives that would then be intensively studied to locate themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The qualitative approach to this study was also chosen with the idea to discover information without prescribing meaning in advance. It was utilized in order to provide information rather than confirming or denying previously held ideas in the field or the researcher's own preconceived ideas or hypotheses. Furthermore, the qualitative approach arose from a desire to utilize academic analysis to examine the real lives of the people interviewed. With a heterogeneous group such as the one used for this study, encompassing variations in gender, race, and culture, it is expected that no single hypothesis could come close to synthesizing the experiences of the research participants. It is understood that such a small study will not be generalizable to the population, but instead would provide an opportunity to generate theory that could be used in the future in more focused quantitative and qualitative studies with a larger group of participants.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed according to the grounded theory approach to qualitative research primarily utilizing Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) work as a guide. Verbatim interview transcripts were imported into the N6 computer program and partitioned into sentence-long text units. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that the first step in qualitative analysis is the process of generating open codes. Open coding is the "analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). For this study, open codes were created through the process of identifying a thought from the interview that was expressed in either a sentence or group of sentences, breaking it down, then applying a conceptual label to it that served to identify the phenomenon represented by that thought. To produce the conceptual label or open code, questions such as: "What is the participant saying?," and "What does this statement represent?," were asked of the data. Ideally, open coding is designed to describe the phenomenon presented by the thought in a way that is specific enough to capture the essence of that individual's experience, yet general enough to be applicable to the experience of other participants if the phenomenon emerges in subsequent transcripts. Careful attention was paid to avoid duplicate codes and, when discovered, the two codes and their data were merged under one comprehensive code.

Throughout the coding process, the open codes were compared, sorted, and categorized in order to distinguish their properties, and corresponding dimensions. Following open coding, the data were categorized by what Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) call the axial coding process. Through axial coding, each category was analyzed and grouped according to similar context, causal conditions, interactional patterns and

common phenomena. Axial codes bring the open codes to a new level of meaning and comprehension, which moves the researcher closer to a more theoretical understanding of the phenomena observed.

Beginning with the initial reading of each transcript, memos were recorded to make notations on interesting content, connections to literature and for the purposes of recording possible theoretical ideas. Memos continued to be recorded throughout the coding process as well and were used to guide the process of open, axial and selective coding and finally data analysis.

Selective coding represents the final stage of data analysis. The concepts that emerged from the open and axial coding, as well as the information contained in the memos, are then analyzed and interpreted in order to select categories that represent the core of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For the primary focus of this dissertation, six selective categories were chosen to focus on that represent the key questions posed in the literature review. Table 2 depicts the selective, axial and open codes generated from this study. Coding did not proceed in a linear fashion, but instead became an organic process ebbing and flowing from one concept and code label to the next and back again according the ways in which new discoveries dictated. Throughout the coding process, data were compared, contrasted, questioned, organized and reorganized within and between each transcript to incorporate new discoveries.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Four key questions generated by the literature review have been identified as the primary foci for data analysis and will be restated as follows:

1) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's identity?
2) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's relationships with family members?
3) What effect does social mobility have on the participant's identity?
4) What effect does social mobility have on the participant's relationships with family members?

The coded data addressing these key questions were analyzed and categorized into six selective categories twelve axial categories and thirty-three open categories, and will be presented with examples from the interview transcripts in this section (Table #2).

Growing Up in a Working Class Family

The current research is based upon each participant's self-identification as a person who grew up in a working class family, as such there is some variation in the level of financial means and hardships that each family experienced. Some were poorer then others. Some experienced periods of economic prosperity often followed by hard financial times, while others reported a steady increase in their family's financial status as they grew older.

Experience of Life with Limited Financial Resources: Selective Code

Though information about growing up in a working class family does not directly address the four research questions, data from the interviews related to this subject is

being reviewed and documented here in order to provide background information that will serve to guide and structure the results related to the focus of the research and put them into context. Each participant was asked to describe their family's financial status throughout childhood. Two axial codes and four open codes were distinguished within this selective category. The reported experiences ranged along a continuum between comfortable and stressful. The family's financial status placed some of the participants in a familiar place in society where they felt acceptance and belonging. Still others experienced a longing to escape their meager financial origins and described being plagued by shame, the feeling of being ostracized by their more affluent counterparts, as well as a sense of often feeling at a disadvantage. As individuals from working class families, the status of working class not only brought with it limited financial resources in terms of a limited cash flow, but participants talked about the ways in which their working class upbringing affected the quality of their education, healthcare, dietary practices, morals, values, ideals and appearance casting them as 'different' from the middle class. As the transcript excerpts will demonstrate, these differences, though often perceived as negative, at times, took on a positive perception.

Social Class as Burden: Axial Code

Some participants experienced the stigmatizing effect of membership in the working class. Some of the stigma in the form of ridicule and judgment was generated from outside sources, while much was also generated from within the participants themselves in the form of shame and embarrassment and an inherent sense of feeling diminished and inferior.

Felt disadvantaged: Open code.

Several participants reported feeling at a disadvantage growing up particularly with respect to material possessions, available opportunities for educational and financial advancement, and family stress related to parents being overworked and worried due to limited finances. One participant stated:

I was very conscious of not having resources, of not having things.

Oftentimes, the family's financial status was not concealed from the participants and they had a keen sense of what was and was not available to them:

> *...one of the class things that comes to mind is for example, things that were available on T.V. or toys or whatever that, you know, that were on T.V. was such a fantasy world. It had no bearing on reality to me. So it never would occur to me to want something that I saw kids have on T.V. That really just all seemed as made up.*

Yet another participant stated:

> *Um, but I also think I was also probably trained in some way to not ask for something that would be ridiculous, you know.*

Curiously, very few participants spoke of an intense longing for more resources or material items growing up. Some spoke of what could be viewed as a type of conditioning in which they learned early on not to expect an excess of material items.

Some participants reported becoming acutely aware of their disadvantaged state following particular encounters with other people or class environments that were more financially stable. For example, the following excerpt is a statement from a participant

who learned of the deficits in his education and educational environment following a trip to a more affluent school:

> *I guess I think my academic career might have been easier if I had grown up in a different neighborhood… There weren't as many courses offered in my high school and I guess I draw from this experience; when I was a senior in high school I was on student council and I went to another high school in* (City) *which was more affluent and that's when I first recognized the fact that all schooling is not equal.*
>
> *Shame: Open code.*

Some, though not a great majority of the participants, did report incidences of shame related to their financial status and the social class this placed them in. Those who did report shame often described ways in which they would attempt to conceal their social class from outsiders. One participant described her experience of shame in this way:

> *I didn't have friends over. And that's probably. And that's the biggest way first to how it* (financial and class status) *affected me. For a long time I didn't have friends over at all. Later on in high school I did… when I was a little bit more able to kind of manage the space when I was there like who was there, what people would be exposed to my folks, a little bit more. I needed to be confident in my ability to sort of do impression management with my friends.*

This same participant had a particularly difficult time coping with the perceived stigma of the family's financial status and went on to say:

> *I was ashamed of my father. Not for the financial things. I had no sense really and I wasn't judging of you know, whether or not he was financially providing appropriately for our family but I was ashamed of the way he smelled, the way he talked, of you know, of his tastes, you know. That, it made me cringe to have Hee Haw going on and you know, all the other, like, you know.*

The majority of the other participants who mentioned experiencing a sense of shame related to their limited financial resources growing up reported more of a sense of shame generated from not having as many material resources as their more financially stable neighbors and friends. A few of the participants described growing up with the sense that they were outsiders in their communities. Others reported hearing comments and experiencing negative sentiment from those who would label their neighborhood as *the other side of the tracks*. These statements came, by and large, from participants who lived or attended school in neighborhoods populated by families in higher social classes, as one participant's comment illustrates:

> *I lived with people who were middle class when my mom and I were not… it was clearly frustrating. At times definitely frustrating. At times a sense of shame of not having certain things. I think because I didn't grow up in a poor neighborhood so that made it somewhat more challenging.*

Still others reported that outsiders would denigrate their parents' professions or make derogatory comments about their appearance, homes, cars, and limited material possessions.

Social Class as Place of Belonging: Axial Code

Though there were numerous reports related to the disadvantages and stigmatization of a childhood growing up in a working class household, several of the participants, nevertheless, reported a sense of community within their neighborhoods and extended family, anchored by their shared struggles and triumphs of living with limited financial resources. Two open codes were distinguished within this category.

Comfortable with class level: Open code.

Several participants reported growing up in families and communities in which their limited financial resources were not a negative stigmatization or burden. Familiarity and similarity negated the existence of shame and disadvantage and these participants were able to celebrate the culture of their class. One participant recalled his working class neighborhood in this way:

> *When I think about my childhood what comes to mind? I, I, I guess I think about growing up in a neighborhood where there are lots and lots of children and lots of families like ourselves. And, you know, playing and sort of being out in the neighborhood and participating in all the stuff that sort of comes to mind.*

This participant paints a picture for the reader of a warm, homogenous environment that speaks to the level of comfort and acceptance experienced.

Strong work ethic: Open code.

Many participants identified strengths resulting from their working class upbringing, particularly the development of a strong work ethic. The participant in the following excerpt demonstrates his development of a strong work ethic that emerged from his meager beginnings:

> *If anything it gave encouragement to continue to work hard and it encouraged, it actually taught me the value of a dollar, if anything, and how I should appreciate the things that I have. But if anything it actually made me stronger and not, not jealous of another kids or emotionally, you know, angry or anything like that because we weren't able to afford that, no.*

Other participants acknowledged their admiration of their parents' strong work ethic, highlighting the perseverance and ingenuity displayed. One participant proudly stated:

> *…she's* (participant's mother) *gifted at being able to make a meal out of when there's nothing in the house to eat…*

Some shared a strong belief that working hard leads to success and were able to proudly identify their parental role models as well as themselves as examples of this idea. This participant echoed the American dream, stressing the importance of hard work in his interview:

> *...I think the way I can sum it up is this is what America can give you the opportunity for. It gives you the opportunity to get to the upper classes and the way you do it is to work hard and eventually if you do work hard and you make sacrifices you can get there.*

Experience of Life with Limited Financial Resources: Selective Code Summary

The participants' experiences of life with limited finances were distributed among the dimensions of burden and belonging. One participant claimed to feel comfortable with her class level, but simultaneously devalued her father and was ashamed of his markers of social class, which belied her claims. Other participants lived in insulated communities where their experience of working class status was the accepted norm, thus

the dimension of belonging. Those who experienced the most burden of class in relation to finances, generally, were those who grew up in the working class with more consistent exposure to upper and middle class society.

Family's View of Education Growing Up: Selective Code

Data were collected about the attitudes the participants and their families had toward education, the process of being educated and how the participants experienced the educational environment as persons from working class backgrounds. From these data, two axial categories and five open categories were derived. Nearly all of the participants grew up in family environments that encouraged and supported their early education. Some families valued physical labor more than academics and didn't monitor homework or place heavy emphasis on reading or academic excellence, but none of the participants talked about living in an environment where early education was actively discouraged. Most participants also received some amount of encouragement for the pursuit of an undergraduate degree. However, the degree to which their parents were involved in their academic pursuits was perceived as significantly less than the other middle or upper class students the participants encountered, due to the working class parents' lack of familiarity with this environment.

Education is Valued: Axial Code

Participants overwhelmingly reported that their families supported and encouraged their education as children and adolescents. Education was seen as a necessary part of daily life for many and for some as a clear path to economic prosperity. Nevertheless, a very practical goal-oriented perspective on education was taken by nearly all of the participants' parents and family members in their early lives.

Expectation of academic pursuits: Open code.

Several of the participants reported that their families held strong expectations that the children in the family would do well in school. One participant had this to say about her family's academic expectations:

> *...school was really important and encouraged. We were, it was absolutely expected that we would do well.*

Yet another participant stated:

> *I mean, both of them* (parents) *basically said, you know, you guys have gifts and you're expected to you know, to come home with As. We have these expectations and if you don't come home with those grades we're gonna have to have a serious sit-down. My father was much more, um, I would say vocal about it or insistent upon it. My mother was more quiet about it but it was, it was, you know, we were expected to do that. There was, you know, no excuses. You have the ability. Do it.*

The process of education in the preceding excerpt sounds similar to a job in which the skills are possessed by a person, the person applies the skills to the job and executes the task. Though the support, encouragement, and valuing of education is clearly present, little if any consideration seems to have been given to accommodate the nuances of a child's level of understanding, their strengths, weaknesses or interests.

Support provided for academic pursuits: Open code.

All but two of the participants specifically spoke about the ways in which their family supported and encouraged their early education. For the participants who spoke about support, much of it was hands-on. Parents would oversee homework and question

their children about tests and grades in an attempt to maintain some involvement and, essentially, some control over the academic process. As one participant stated:

> *I mean, every single day, every minute I grew up all they* (parents) *talk about is study, study, study. They, no matter what you do you have to be the best in class. They don't really care if you do bad in one class or one subject. My mom and I would spend time making sure that I improve in that section so that the next result you know, is not like the previous one but it's better…*

Many of the participants described their families' attitudes towards their studies in a manner that supports the notion that for the working class, education has an expected practical, tangible result of economic prosperity, as this participant describes:

> *And it was a team effort. My mom and I and my family were very focused on my schooling and that it was very clear of all the reasons why I needed to do well… I think that in general my family views education very positively and try their best to get the opportunities, you know, to go to school and not overall it's clear that it's something to be attained, neither for the sake of knowledge but to really, you know, to make it out of the cycles* (of poverty) *so to speak.*

For this particular participant, as none of the adult family members had gone very far in their education, great focus was placed on her as the next generation to succeed where they could not. The hope for her and for other participants like her was to do better economically and have a more financially stable life.

Higher education encouraged: Open code.

For the majority of the participants interviewed there was no question as to whether or not they would attend an undergraduate university. As one participant states:

> *Um, but it was, it was just very apparent that my parents valued it and um, it was understood that we were all going to college and that um, and that money had been set aside for that. It was a given…It wasn't, there was no question or doubt about it. I never questioned it.*

Despite the parent's inability to attend college, there was a clear expectation placed on their offspring to attend. For some, great economic sacrifices were made to assure the child's ability to attend college as well. Some participants described their parents as avid supporters and encouragers of higher education, while other participants described their parents' attitudes as tentative, and skeptical, but open to the idea of a college education. One participant stated:

> *My Dad was in his inimitable way a hard working guy. He had a really strong work ethic and uh, he,- I wanted to go to college. I always did well in school and I, I, had an interest in as long as I can remember I always wanted to go on and do something different than factory work and that kind of thing but my Dad has a very strong work ethic and he made a deal with me really early on. I must have been about 12 or 13 and he was always encouraging me to get a job. Some kind of after- school job and stuff. And he made a deal that if I, every penny that I made I would save he would match it, you know and that, and would give me an allowance. But I had to save everything that I made. I couldn't dip into it to buy a nice pair of sneakers or a new bicycle or whatever. A car or anything...Yeah, the goal was that he would help me with my college, but if I didn't do that he wouldn't help me with it. That was the other side of it. The only way he would help me with college is if I started working and you know, put everything away.*

As this participant and some of the others indicated, their families still could not let go of the idea of their children working hard in a *decent job*. This participant's father had a very difficult time thinking about allowing his son to be fully immersed in academic pursuits. Therefore, the "deal" struck between the father and son allowed the father to see his son do the work that he was familiar with, while at the same time he intended to help his son get to his own eventual goal of going to college, but not without some difficult rules and hurdles to jump. As with any other material item, college was viewed in a similar way as something that was not to be bestowed upon an individual but as something worked for.

Self directed learners: Open code.

A select few participants who had particularly difficult childhoods spoke in a powerful way about their own internal drive to succeed in their pursuit of education. These particular individuals had little or no academic role models or guides and bravely took it upon themselves to get through by any means necessary. One such participant talked about his early dreams of having a graduate degree in this way:

> *Well, I started from high school. The thing is that when I used to look in textbooks I used to see behind people's names like M.S., Ph.D., whatever and in one of my high school chemistry texts I wrote my name and behind my name I put B.S .and I put M.S. and I put Ph.D. when I was in high school there. And then I was about to finish high school and I put down myself I want to achieve all these and I studied teaching.*

Another participant, after enduring a tumultuous childhood filled with gaps in her early education, said this about her struggle in her first college courses:

> *So I signed up and started taking classes and I didn't do really well because at that point I didn't know how to study. Um, although I somehow I learned. I placed. I placed some value in education, um, so somewhere along the line I learned that but I didn't know how to, I didn't know how to execute that. I had the values but didn't know how to actually attain an education or do well in an educational institution. But I did fine. I scraped by and got C's and you know, did better.*

These participants demonstrated a high degree of perseverance and drive that was quite admirable. The level of self-directed learning demonstrated by these individuals spoke to an innate need and desire to enhance and improve their intellectual capacities.

Academia as Unfamiliar Environment: Axial Code

Due to the fact that the parents of the participants were not college educated, it stands to reason that they had little or in most cases, absolutely no idea of the process involved in school enrollment after the high school level. Participants reported that they had no role models in their parents to guide them through this task. Participants spoke most in depth about the college application process and the ways in which they either had to navigate this on their own, or enlist older siblings or mentors and counselors outside the home to help.

Parents unable to assist in preparing for post-secondary education: Open code.

Few families were experienced and knowledgeable enough to help the participants apply to college or assist in any of the decisions related to attending a college. Most participants navigated this process, often blindly, on their own. When

asked who helped with the process of applying to undergraduate universities this participant stated:

> *Who helped me? Nobody. And that's one of the things that I think I lacked growing up and that was guidance as far as finding a higher, you know, you know, educational institution or higher, I guess, how can I phrase it? There was really no one.*

This participant had a similar experience and was able to think about how things would be different now for her children because of her own education.

> *But I think if I had a parent who was educated, who's an engineer or something or even, you know, had a higher degree or even had gone through the college experience I think they would have been a guidance. You know, I think of myself to my children and I could provide a lot more guidance education wise.- I think there was a lot more of a struggle for me.*

Family's View of Education Growing Up: Selective Code Summary

The selective code examining the family's view of education produced dimensions related to the valuing of education and being unfamiliar with education. The data indicate no clear outright devaluing of education, but a lack of familiarity that produces apathy and disinterest in the participants' families. The participants themselves described the results of their parents' unfamiliarity as an added disadvantage and burden that they did not witness their middle and upper class counterparts experiencing. The other dimension of this selective code characterized by the valuing of education indicates an ability to see value in the

unknown in both the families and in the participants themselves as demonstrated by their drive for self-directed learning.

Graduate Education

Data were collected about the attitudes the participants and their families had toward graduate education, the process of being educated and how the participants experienced the educational environment as persons from working class backgrounds. The decision to enter graduate school for many participants proved to be yet another unfamiliar process with a mixture of support and ambivalence from their families as well as from the academic environment they were about to enter

Graduate Education Experience and Effect on the Self: Selective Code

Participants talked about the changes in themselves following their entrance into graduate school. Aside from the expected experience of acquiring new information and becoming critical thinkers, which happens to most students involved in graduate work, the experience of academia was even more life and mind altering due to their impoverished upbringing. Two axial categories were coded from the data. From these axial codes, seven open codes were distinguished.

Participants talked about being exposed to alternative ways of thinking and engaging the world that were not available to them while growing up in working class environments. For those who had the opportunity to engage more middle- and upper-class classmates and professors, many talked about their sense that their own thoughts, behaviors, customs and values differed, often greatly, in comparison. A common belief stressed by most interviewees was the sense that completing their education was a tremendous success that made them feel a sense of confidence in themselves. One

participant described her excitement and sense of mastery in graduate school in this way when talking about learning theory:

> *... I just clicked with it* (theory). *I mean, I was. I understood it immediately and knew that this was something I could do and it helped. Theories felt very empowering. And um, it seemed to hold the answers to all of these questions I had had.*

Conversely, many participants spoke about their time in graduate school as a period of self-doubt, degradation, and inadequacy. For some, academia highlighted the differences and deficits resulting from growing up in a working class environment. This same participant described her jarring experience of feeling alien in her academic environment in the following excerpt:

> *When I met* (Name)*, my husband, who's really amazing and comes from kind of an unusual background himself and so we could relate on a lot of levels and he's- we can talk about anything so I thought that all of academia would be that way and there was this place, this mythical place that you could go and everyone would understand you, you know, and they're a bunch of misfits just like, just like me. Um, and the realization that that wasn't the case was kind of a difficult one for me because I thought everyone would be like* (Name). *Everyone would know me, you know. But instead I found myself um, feeling just as alienated and feeling as though my experience differed in such drastic ways that I didn't fit in and I feel that way now. I don't know to what degree I was imposing that interpretation or that I was projecting that onto everyone else but even if I was, that still* (had)

enough effect. That's still a product of my childhood and being financially disadvantaged.

This participant's expectations of academia were far afield of her reality. The melting pot of the minds that academia was supposed to be, left her feeling as though she didn't fit in and, as she explains later in her interview, this feeling caused her to hide those aspects of herself that would be perceived as different by her middle and upper class professors and classmates. This process of self-concealment was not uncommon.

Felt at a Disadvantage: Axial Code

For many of the participants, graduate school represented a new culture requiring assimilation. Through the process of encountering this new culture, most students were faced with the task of evaluating themselves in comparison to those who didn't experience the environment of academia as so different from where they had grown up. Participants talked about noticing differences between themselves and their middle- and upper-class classmates and professors that made them feel inferior and at a disadvantage. These observations then brought about an often negative reflection upon the deficits of their working-class upbringing, thus highlighting their lack of preparedness for academia, certain social and interpersonal deficits and for some, their level of ignorance regarding academic resources.

Low level of parental education as deficit and disadvantage: Open code.

For students who attended universities with a diverse student population in terms of social and economic status, many were made aware of their own deficits of experience when comparing themselves to their middle- and upper-class counterparts. Many stated that their working[PF1]-class upbringing, including their parent's lack of knowledge

regarding academia, placed them at a disadvantage, thus hindering their ability to navigate the system of higher education as well as other students born into higher social classes. One participant stated:

> *Um, I think I was most aware of people whose parents were in the field. And so I thought, oh, well, that could be tremendous help just in terms of mentoring or knowing what to expect. Um, or the type of support in graduate school that I felt like I couldn't really get from my parents. They just didn't know,- and the financial resources that can go along with that.*

Several participants focused specifically on the fact that their parents were not highly educated and therefore were unable to provide guidance for their children's educational experience.

> *Well, it definitely would be the education and the fact that they* (parents) *didn't have any college experience at all to share. You know, things like, I'm sure if my father was a Ph.D., you know, he could have warned me about some of the politics I should definitely be aware of, like setting up a committee*.

Other participants expressed the idea that their parents' lack of academic knowledge was compounded by an overall scarcity of cultural experience. Participants reported that their parents had a lack of general exposure to the world which was hindered not only by economic deficits, but a shortage of information, and interest. Participants perceived their parents' deficits as having direct links to their own deficits in academia as one participant describes:

> *I think it was the lack of my parents' education. I didn't get exposed to a lot of cultural activities that are much more common and prevalent in the academic*

> *environment. Performing arts and museums and you know, that kind of stuff. There wasn't much of that at all that I can recollect and in some ways I feel ill I felt ill prepared to have the culturally rich background of understanding that some other students had.*

Some participants were able to describe their feelings of envy of those who had the opportunity to grow up in the middle class society that they only became acquainted with as adults.

> *I actually struggled with some feelings of envy when I first got here…My husband is here too and he finished his Ph.D. and his M.D. and we babysat some uh, teen-agers who were, who were the kids of some doctors at the* (Name) *Hospital and they go to the lab school which is a really great, um, elementary through, through high school that's affiliated with the* (University) *and um, and we, after our first- I cried. We had dinner with them and they were so well educated and so um, their lives were so good and they were being encouraged to, you know, to, um, to learn music and to do drama and all of this stuff and, you know, they were. None of this stuff that I never got to do and um, and I found myself thinking about, well, what if I had had an education. What if I had had an upbringing like that? What could I have accomplished and um.*

This participant's experience of pain is so poignant in this excerpt. The feelings related to having grown up in a disadvantaged environment seem to become more relevant and painful when one sees how those in other social classes live. For some participants, encountering this new social environment prompted an evaluation of their own

upbringing that often resulted in a focus on what was lacking, making it extremely difficult to identify what was gained.

Intellectual, social and interpersonal deficits: Open code.

Many participants who felt at a disadvantage due to their working class upbringing also felt intellectually inferior and less self-assured than their middle and upper class counterparts in graduate school. Though the participants were obviously intelligent and capable considering how far they had come academically, there was still an internal sense that they could not think well enough and, for some, could not communicate in classes and express themselves well. One participant recalls:

> *You know, one thing does come to my mind that I see a lot is being from a lower privileged background I kind of think my verbal skills aren't as good. I don't have as good public speaking skills as, someone who I can see that they had a great upbringing. And I'm like, their parents probably had money. Right away. And you can see the difference. Sometimes it's really hard for me to you know, feel confident when I'm public speaking because I don't know, something about the class background, yeah. In that way I find myself different. I don't think I had as much confidence as some of my fellow grad students who maybe had a better upbringing.*

Another participant spoke of her deficits in graduate school in this way:

> *Um, I think sometimes like I'm playing catch-up. Uh, you know, like not having, either like a store of knowledge or knowing that I have to go out and ask these things and find out.*

Yet another person talked about being at a disadvantage in graduate school because of her difficulty speaking in class and was able to directly tie this deficit to her upbringing.

> *I struggled with being able to speak in class. Um, mainly because I had, you know, this kind of self imposed censorship thing going on and never. I was never sure because I was never really encouraged to speak about um, well, to really talk about anything* (as a child)… *So I was always very quiet and very shy and um, and I felt that people who came from more privileged backgrounds were usually much more confident expressing themselves so sometimes. So especially about abstract things or, you know, issues that aren't related to you as an individual or connected to your personal experience that it can just. People who are better educated learn to speak about those things or learn to speak about things in the world, um, and it just feels natural to them. There's no linguistic insecurities and but I suffer from a tremendous amount of that.*

The effect of these insecurities and deficits on the participants caused many of them to overcompensate for their social, intellectual and interpersonal deficiencies to appear equal in the eyes of their middle and upper class professors and classmates as one participant explains:

> *I'm certainly intimidated by others around me at times and not, not sure of myself. Not very confident of myself. Always thinking that I need to go that extra mile to impress someone or, that's about it.*
>
> *No awareness of resources: Open code.*

Once in their Ph.D. programs, some participants spoke about feeling as though they were lacking access to vital practical information that would assist them in

navigating the academic system. In addition to the general lack of knowledge that some participants possessed in this particular area, there was also an apparent lack of entitlement. Participants spoke about having poor mentors in college who did not prepare them for the graduate school application process. Others had the general sense that their middle and upper class classmates somehow were privy to a body of information related to coursework, scholarships, funding, the acquisition of required academic materials and professorial relationships that they themselves simply did not possess. As one participant so vividly recalls:

> *I think that middle class and upper class graduate students were, it was like there was some magical formula that they know or some, like fellowship and grant information. I didn't have a fucking clue and nobody, nobody saw to it that we all knew what they were about and how you get them and what they're for so I felt very disadvantaged in terms of understanding how you go about, anything to do with the fellowship process or internship. I guess I kind of always thought really well into graduate school that, that those are things that get bestowed on you. I had no clue about a sort of active application process.*

Yet another student stated plainly:

> *I certainly lacked the ability to negotiate the system, to know what to do or not to do. I mean it was like a by the seat of my pants type of thing.*

Positive Effects on Self Image: Axial Code

As students from the working class, the sense of accomplishment that graduate school represented was something not be taken for granted. Participants talked about the

positive ways in which their image of themselves as highly educated individuals was so important to their development as successful adults.

Working class upbringing as an asset: Open code.

Participants spoke about the ways in which their working class lifestyle and value system proved to be an asset during their journey through higher education. Despite a significant amount of financial hardship and struggle experienced by the following participant during his childhood and adult life, he still emerged from his journey into academia with this to say:

> *I normally go to class and I sit at the back and I was always tired because during the night I used to do security work and during the day I would do construction and I'm always tired and when I did my tests and I see that I got the highest grade, you know, and you talk to the other kids and they're all, oh, they're all living with their parents, you know, they don't have to worry too much and those kind of stuff, you know. It, it makes me feel the same way that I was back home that you know, as long, as long as you're doing the dog* (i.e. working hard) *and you struggle for what you, you know, what you achieve, you know, working hard towards it, it's, it stays there for a longer time than those people who just, you know, have everything for themselves.*

One participant was able to turn a potentially negative attribute of her upbringing into a positive asset for her experience in academia in this way:

> *... as the ninth of ten kids I had to be able to get in there quickly if I wanted to be heard and had a lot of verbal sparring experience and so on, so I didn't feel damaged by that kind of interaction in graduate classrooms where a lot of other*

people I know had a very difficult time with that sort of interaction and that was an important skill that I got.

Legitimized by the Ph.D. degree: Open code.

The success of being an educated person not only made some participants feel more confident internally, but there was a clear valuing of the confidence they felt when others knew their credentials, which signified the fact that they had succeeded in academia. One participant spoke about completing her work in this way:

Yeah, I mean, particularly being a black woman to call myself a doctor is-- in-- in some terms, in terms of self esteem, it helps. I'm a school psychologist. And I go out to-- I go out to meetings a lot. And I'm always perceived as a parent because of the color of my skin dealing within the educational system. And so then when I introduce myself, you know…And then there's a certain level of respect once I say who I am. There's a certain level of respect that often- you know, suddenly things change a little bit, because I say that I'm Dr. (Name).

Another participant spoke about the confidence she felt regarding her legitimization in this way:

I was always confident but I feel more confident now. I mean it doesn't hurt to have a degree after your name. The more degrees when you sign papers at work, the more you impress the clients.

Success as collective: Open code.

For some participants, the success in academia was not only felt and coveted by the self, but perceived as a shared success for the entire family. Some participants gave credit to their parents for working so hard to provide for them, thus instilling a strong

work ethic and enabling them to succeed. Others saw their own accomplishments as a way to forge a new path of success for future generations in the family. For example:

> *But I mean the biggest thing's probably for me internally in getting my Ph.D. is not so much me but it's what it means for my family and for my nieces and my nephew and my daughter. And it means that, you know, if I can do it, they- the world is just so open to them and they can do anything. And it's--like again, it's not for me, it's for them. And so I just feel like, wow, the possibilities in front of them are just endless, you know. And because I was able to go through that, I know that I'm gonna give them the same courage and- you know, I- I just feel so good about that aspect. That because now that somebody's done it, like, everybody can do it. And I'm gonna be here to help anybody in my family that needs to do it.*

Many participants felt a responsibility to set an example for their family and community by their academic achievements. For these individuals, success in academia was viewed as a breakthrough in the cycle of class stagnation, thus blazing a new trail for the success of future generations

Increased confidence: Open code.

Despite their working class upbringing and perceived deficits, most of the participants knew that they were intelligent and capable enough to complete their education. Participants reported that the process of completing their graduate education, however, confirmed their sense of confidence in themselves. One participant said the following about her intellectual abilities:

> *... there was an article I read in the Parent-Teacher's Association journal that said, you know, "If you- if you support your child and really help them with their homework and make sure they're doing their- their studies and- work with them through school, they can really excel." And I thought to myself, "Well I didn't get any of that." And I still excelled. So I must be smart!*

A sense of empowerment was felt by some of the participants following the completion of their degree. As one participant recalls:

> *It's made me realize that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. And, and I do feel that.*

Other participants stated that the process of working toward and completing their degree increased their confidence in themselves and their academic and intellectual abilities. For many, their success represented a singular achievement in their families in that no one else had earned a graduate degree.

Graduate Education Experience and Effect on the Self: Selective Code Summary

The two dimensions of this selective code represent a broad range in which this significant life event affects the working class student. The disadvantages presented by the participants were represented in deficits of core aspects of the self such as deficits in mind, self-esteem, self- representation and level of intelligence. Participants did not necessarily experience the dimensions within this selective code exclusively in that endorsement of one dimension did not exclude the other. Some participants who felt at a disadvantage were still able to identify clear positive effects on their self image.

The Effect of Graduate Education on Family Relationships: Selective Code

As the data from the review of participants' responses to the effect of education indicates, there appears to be a clear impact of higher education on the lives and identities of students from the working class. Consequently, participants spoke about the various ways in which their family members both noticed and responded to these changes. From data on the effect of education on family relationships, two axial categories were distinguished. Within these two axial categories seven open categories were identified.

Distance in Family Relationships: Axial Code

None of the participants stated that their family members rejected their graduate studies outright. What occurred in these families may have actually been more damaging. Many of the negative responses to the changes in the participants due to education manifested themselves as covert or defensive maneuvers by many of the family members. Participants reported instances involving distancing, misunderstanding, alienation and an inability to relate to the other. The result of these patterns of interaction was often silence, some denigration of the participant and their educational pursuits and a general sense of disconnection. Sadly, few participants or their family members seemed to openly acknowledge the pain of the distance created.

Alienation-disconnection of experience: Open code.

Feelings of being alienated or distanced from their families due to education were common among the participants. The rift created by the differences in knowledge and experience caused the participants to feel not only different from, but separated from their families. Participants talked about an inability to relate to their family members throughout their schooling because the family had no frame of reference with which to

contextualize the participant's studies and experiences. The alienation stemmed from not only being different because one is educated, but also from being misunderstood. The name for this open category has been taken directly from the words of one of the participants. In this transcript excerpt, the participant responds to a question asked about why she stopped talking to her family about what she was studying in graduate school:

> *They're not interested in it. It doesn't seem particularly real to them. There's a way where, you know, they're. I don't know. It's just very removed from like, they can't picture what it is I spend my day doing. Just a disconnection of experience and familiarity that makes it hard to connect and so it ends up I think at some point I felt like I was lecturing or trying to teach them something about what I was doing and what this or that work meant and I stopped being able to figure out how to have conversations with them about it.*

As this participant explains and others have experienced, there is a tremendous difficulty in bringing their interests and essentially their life's work into the family sphere. Several participants talked about the family's inability to truly understand them when discussing their studies. The first challenge for these participants was to try to explain their work to their family members, and the next challenge was to avoid being overly pedantic or appearing condescending. The other difficult challenge, particularly with parents, was to maintain the parental hierarchy while trying to teach and expose the parents to something new. As one person recalls:

> *... for the most part they* (parents) *never really understood my education. They never understood what I was studying or how long or what the expectations would be. They never knew anything about a dissertation before I did one. They*

didn't even know what it was called. They kept calling it the wrong name. They kept calling it a differation.

So few family members understood the basic requirements of graduate school, how difficult the coursework was, or the nature of the stress and worries the participants experienced. Participants were again disconnected and alienated from their family because few could help the family truly understand their struggles and even fewer received the support and encouragement that felt commensurate with their experience.

While in graduate school no one really understood why I was in graduate school or why it was taking so long so that kind of annoyed me. And when you finally get out, you finally graduate it's like no big deal to anybody and they don't, they don't understand why it took you so long or what the big deal is. To them it's just, you know, taking a couple of classes, writing a paper and being done with it so it's almost kind of a, I don't know if condescending is a right word but you kind of, you have difficulty explaining it to people, what the experience was about and so you get frustrated and you don't even want to bother.

Self-censorship and silence: Open code.

Self-censorship emerged as a common mechanism to cope with feelings of alienation and the disconnection of experience. Several participants spoke about censoring their comments in family discussions or refusing to engage in conversations altogether with family members not only about their studies but about topics that the participant knew more about than their family members. The participants were thoughtful and eloquent in their interviews when describing why they censored themselves. Some did so to avoid engaging in conflicts with family members who had opposing viewpoints.

Other participants either refused to get involved in or tempered their responses to intellectual discussions about such topics as politics, religion, current events and sexuality, because they didn't want to humiliate or embarrass others by bringing forth more educated factual information that would threaten to dismantle their family's knowledge base. As one participant stated:

> *And in fact there are certain family members now that I, I you know, that I'll hear them say things where you know, known by, you know, maybe by 75% of graduate students not to be true or common knowledge in graduate- any graduate course you know, you just don't want to embarrass. I certainly don't want to embarrass any of my family members. I certainly don't want to embarrass any of my friends so I'll, you know, I'll just either say, oh, that's not what I heard or say, or I may in jest say, you know, there are other opinions or you know, that's not, that's not what people think nowadays.*
>
> *Education upsets hierarchical balance in family: Open code.*

Some participants reported that the role reversal of child teaching parent felt uncomfortable to them:

> *Even with my parents at times. They'll, they'll make a comment that I know to, I know not to be true. And so just, I don't now. I feel very uncomfortable. I feel extremely uncomfortable correcting them just because it's not, you know, it's not appropriate. I just don't feel like it's appropriate and it won't, it won't do them any good and it certainly won't do me any good, you know.*

It seems as though being in the position to correct his parents caused this participant, the adult child, to feel disrespectful, and or awkward. Participants described the ways in

which this situation upset the balance and hierarchy of the family structure. In reference to her relationship with her mother, another participant simply and painfully stated:

> *I think she feels that she understands me less somehow…I do think our world is so different sometimes.*

A few participants talked about feeling uncomfortable being more educated than their parents. One person said this about her parent's feelings of resentment toward her:

> *Sometimes I feel like the smarty pants in the family but in some way, my Mom particularly resents it a little bit when like I might know something that she doesn't know. You know, teasingly, I know that every now and then it hits a little soft spot, you know.*
>
> *Family pokes fun at education: Open code.*

The lack of understanding that many of the participants' family members had regarding graduate education often led to critical evaluations regarding the process of earning an advanced degree. It is notable that none of the participants reported that their family members openly disparaged their graduate education, but some reported that family members made subtle derogatory jokes or humorous comments that were meant to relay some negative sentiment. For example:

> *My mother thought that I had actually taken the education thing too far but I was really- In fact they say a lot of pejorative things, like I heard a lot, oh, she's a professional student, that, you know, she's just gonna be in school forever. It became viewed as an avoidance of growing up. An avoidance of doing real work.*

Other participants reported that family members would tease them if they didn't know the meaning of a particular word or concept. One participant playfully remarked that her

family refused to play Scrabble with her because they believed her to be too smart, thus placing them at an unfair advantage.

Pressure of knowing: Open code.

A few participants spoke about the ways in which their education created a pressure within their family to know certain answers to important questions, to be an expert not only in their field of study but overall, in general life questions and dilemmas and, in some instances, to represent perfection. This "pressure of knowing" was presented in different ways by the participants who experienced it, but what was common in their accounts was the sense of discomfort it generated within them.

> *They haven't said anything but I'm treated differently. They, they want to know what I think about things more, particularly things that happen in the family and what I think should happen, recommendations, I mean, it's, it's a, and it, I have to say I don't like it. Um, and it's not that I don't want to share my impressions. Um, but I feel like now I'm able to say things that they don't want to hear. They won't do anything about it, so it's like you drum up things or have a different take on things but they won't, it doesn't mean that they're gonna necessarily follow through just because I'm a psychologist…*

Another participant stated:

> *You feel that, I constantly feel like I have to set an example. I have to be a role model for all of my younger cousins. You know, you don't feel like you can make a mistake because you know, everyone is watching you and certain people are watching you and waiting for you to make a mistake because they'll harp on that. You know, and regardless of how much you've succeeded up to this point it's not*

that that they'll remember it's the, you know, either the faux paux, social faux paux or the you know, comment that you made with a couple of drinks in you that you shouldn't have made, you know, or... you just, you have to take I guess your, you have to,- I just feel like I'm under a microscope. I feel like I'm under a magnifying glass.

Acceptance of Education: Axial Code

Though the process of becoming educated proved to be a difficult one for most of the participants and their families, many, at some level, were able to transcend the difficulties to focus on the accomplishment and express support and pride. The acceptance of education, in some cases, was a full acceptance of the changes that education had brought into the families, but certainly an acceptance of the task in and of itself.

Support: Open code.

Every participant was able to mention examples of how their family members provided support during their graduate education. As the data will demonstrate, this support, however was often not exactly what they had hoped for. A few of the participants talked about their family's skepticism regarding the field of study they were entering and how that tempered the family's excitement and encouragement about the participant being in graduate school. One participant talked about her parent's response to her decision to enroll in graduate school in this way:

Um, they were, they were supportive. Um, I mean that the, the hint of reservation that I detected was related to the fact that it's psychology and not that I'm, you know, going for an advanced degree. Sort of this wariness and wondering and

it's like, you know, that kind of thing. But they were definitely supportive of the fact that I wanted more education.

Others were able to more clearly describe their family's unconditional sense of support. For example:

My mother was just really thrilled about it, you know. She was very excited for me. And she was always a big fan and a coach and a cheerleader and all of that kind of stuff. You know, she was always real supportive of my work and you know, proud of me and that sort of a thing so she was thrilled.

Participants described the particular ways in which their family members provided support that for some was invaluable, while others were left feeling as though their needs were not met. One participant described her parent's inability to truly know what was stressful and difficult about her graduate education, which made it difficult for them to provide the adequate support.

My dad, my mother they didn't really know exactly what I was going through. Uh, you know, yeah, he (father) *was supportive and he was wishing me well and all that but you know, it's, it's kind of limited in a way.*

The following excerpt is another example of how the family's effort of providing support was appreciated but still did not appear to truly meet the needs of the participant:

They were definitely there emotionally. It was just a different type of emotional support, you know. Whereas they at times didn't understand why I would be stressed out. Their response would constantly be, don't worry about it. You'll do fine. And not really understanding, you know, what the stress was.

Still others had the insight to see how the support from their family members came from

their limited understanding of the graduate experience and therefore could not fully meet their needs. When asked about how her parents provided emotional support while she was in graduate school, one participant responded by saying:

> *Emotional support in my family is Mom coming down and bringing me groceries and cooking for me and buying things. That's how she gives me emotional support so that's why I get on the topic of the financial support because that is how she provides me with emotional support. That's how she does it. Yeah, that is her emotional support for me. She's not the type of mom that really will you know, dig into problems.*

Another participant spoke about the gestures of support from her family:

> *Well my one sister printed up the "Don't Quit" poem and framed it for me and sent it to me. Whenever I reached a milestone there was, we had first exams, second year project, and then we had oral exams, I would get a card or a note from my mom…it just seemed to get better as time went on. Especially coming from my mom who was, you know as I said earlier, was not a talker. She did not express her emotions. For her, well the card and the little things… she was good at gifts, that was you know one of her fortes*[PF2]*. She could pick out great gifts and surprise you with stuff like that. But also it was the comments, you know. "I don't think I could even have done what you're doing," you know.*
>
> *Pride: Open code.*

Many participants reported that their family members expressed great pride in their academic accomplishments. Some participants talked about the ways in which the success associated with completing the degree was also experienced as a family success,

in that the family had produced an academically successful child. Participants described the ways in which they attributed their success to their families and the ways in which their families claimed part of their success as their own. One person described her parent's sense of pride by saying:

> *…they're proud and so I think in some ways they like to show me off. You know, our daughter has a doctorate now, you know. They love to show me off a little bit.*

Another participant stated:

> *I feel pride for my father. You know, he's able to tell his friends that he has two sons with a Ph.D…I hear him say stuff like that. So it was very rewarding to hear that. I didn't do it for that reason. It's a nice side benefit.*

Demonstrations and expressions of pride came from the participant's family members in varying ways, however one of the most touching and humorous was recalled by a woman whose upbringing was one the most financially and emotionally difficult. Following her commencement ceremony this participant invited her parents to attend a class she was teaching at her university. Both parents read all the required material prior to the class and participated fully during the discussion. Afterward, each parent expressed how proud and impressed they were by the participant's teaching abilities.

The Effect of Graduate Education on Family Relationships: Selective Code Summary

The ways in which participants described the effects of graduate education on their relationships with their family members showed a range of responses representing closeness on one hand and distance on the other. Some participants who endorsed distance in their family relationships also reported some sense of support and pride from their family members, but certainly to a lesser extent than those who minimally endorsed

distance in their family relationships. Those participants who reported that their families were clearly and openly accepting of their education had little or no endorsement of distance in their relationships.

Social Mobility

Data were collected about the process of attaining social mobility. Participants spoke about their feelings related to surpassing their parents on a financial level as well as the process of integrating their two social class selves and social class environments. Participants had varying responses, attitudes and feelings related to their social mobility journey which appeared to coincide with their acclimation and reaction to becoming more educated than their parents and, for many, their family of origin.

Social Mobility Experience and Effect on the Self: Selective Code

Participants reported on the changes they experienced in themselves that they attributed to the process of superceding their family of origin in social class. This process of social class mobility via education had often profound effects on the self that, for nearly all of the participants were not anticipated. Each participant described his or her current social class as middle class or higher and had clearly attained social mobility. One participant reported some financial strain but still considered himself middle class due to his professional position, values and lifestyle. The reactions to social mobility ranged from happiness, to guilt, disorientation and alienation to feelings of illegitimacy. Social mobility also prompted many to reflect upon their disadvantaged upbringing. For some, this evaluation proved to be critical in nature, yet others reflected upon their beginnings with a sense of pride and appreciation.

Disintegration of New Identity: Axial Code

Similar to the process of becoming highly educated, advancement to a new social class for most participants represented an entrance into a new culture complete with unfamiliar customs and values. The task of reconciling one's working class past with the middle class present and assimilating to the new class culture, for these participants, required internal as well as external shifts that constituted changes in one's identity.

Alienation-conflicting differences: Open code.

Each participant described feelings of alienation from others, themselves, and or their environment due to their social mobility. Many also described existing conflicts between the ideals of their working class upbringing and those of their new middle class environment. Few participants shared a particular example or type of alienation or conflict, but what they all had in common was an identification of significant changes in themselves and their lifestyles that were often associated with discomfort. One participant described the ways in which her life goals differed from her working class family of origin in this way:

> *Well, um, I think, I, well, lets see maybe this is a value. But I don't know if it's also a function of, like, opportunity. Um, like I think that there's a sense mainly maybe this is more the case of my mother that you, you know, you do things to survive which is, you know, what she had to do. So you don't necessarily take into account or really even consider what would be fulfilling or meaningful. You just wouldn't sort of do things, sort of do these things, like in a robotic, automatic um way of approaching work. Um, and I know from experience that I can't do that.*

This participant's education and financial stability enabled her to make more choices and have more opportunities than her family, which varied greatly from her family members' experience and frame of reference.

Another participant talked about the ways in which her priorities regarding her career aspirations differed greatly from her friends who did not have her level of education:

> *Certainly some of my friends who are actually in better shape financially than I am are disparaged sometimes at my lack of concern with acquiring you know hundreds of thousands of dollars.* (The friends say) *"What do you, what do you mean you don't want to earn that?" I don't know I mean doing what I'm doing now, which is going from private practice to a university position. You know I have friends that think I'm absolutely crazy because of the change in finances as you probably know. A pay cut…But I guess some people think that you know time is money and money is time. So you spend, and that's the main thing to do. That's the American thing to do is to acquire stuff and dollars. And that's just not mine. I want to be happy with what I'm doing. And I want to do research primarily…And I wanna have enough, earn enough dollars to be you know to keep my house and take care of things, and you know have a few extra sheckles.*

Being in the position to have to justify one's professional and economic choices when they did not live up to the consumer-driven American ideal was not uncommon amongst the participants. The sense of feeling misunderstood and consequently alienated as a result was also common.

Changes in values that were attributed to social class mobility created conflict for some of the participants when interacting with others from their working class origins. As one participant recalls:

> *Well, one huge value that has changed is a sense of conflict in my family. I grew up going to Catholic schools and now I'm probably atheist. Huge value that has changed somehow through education. But that's a big one because I'm Columbian and culturally it's a religious culture. So that's, you know, that is sort of a, that is sort of a, it's a topic that I don't, I don't think I probably talk about too much with family…So that's a huge value that's changed.*

One participant made the following statement that generally encapsulates her experience of the changes in her lifestyle brought about by social mobility:

> *That which is not to say that in any way I'm unhappy with my life because I'm not but the, let me say this. My sense of what's routine is so different from what I ever pictured as a kid I think.*

Secrets/distancing: Open code.

Changing morals and values and the degree of divergence from those of the family of origin often prompted silence in the socially mobile individual for what appears to be an effort to manage the distance created by the differences in experience.

> *For example, I mean, there are things that I don't tell. I very often don't tell my family about things that I'm doing because I'm almost embarrassed that I, at how I spend money now. Vacation is a really big one, especially the fact of getting to have pretty long vacations relatively. That's a really big one.*

Several of the participants cited the inability to take vacations as a consequence of the financial limitations of their working class upbringing. This participant obviously moved into a financial position stable enough to afford nice vacations and other extras, but the feelings of guilt evidenced by the concealment of her spending demonstrates some of the emotional difficulties faced in her process of social mobility

Entrance into the middle class for these participants prompted some to manage the degree to which they divulged their working-class pasts. A few participants chose to keep their working class background a secret from their middle class co-workers and friends:

> *I'd say it's been very alienating because I don't. Well, I've always kept a lot of secrets. I don't, I never, I don't volunteer information about my past.*

Another participant, however, preferred that others, particularly his students, not know that he had attained class mobility, with the idea that appearing as a person with a connection to his working class roots would make him more accessible to the working class students he taught.

Questioning legitimacy: Open code.

Following the completion of graduate school and subsequent social mobility, a few of the participants had a difficult time owning their academic and professional success and appeared to question the legitimacy of their intellect as well as their newly acquired middle class status. The questioning of one's legitimacy appeared directly related to coming from a working class background in that these participants had a difficult time feeling a sense of entitlement related to their success. Many also felt uncomfortable in their new social position and their responses indicated a profound effect on the self.

This participant spoke about the ways in which her family's negative stereotypes regarding people in social classes higher than her own growing up caused her to then struggle with viewing herself negatively when she moved to a higher social class. She describes her experience in this way:

> *I think some of the ways that they* (her parents) *didn't or even sort of prepared me not to achieve, which is different than not preparing me to achieve, is like very firm expectations that the system is so rigged that you cannot make it unless you cheat. So the kind of self-questioning that then comes with achieving something is really complicated because trying to figure out geez, did I, did I cheat? What did I do? How did I get here…?*

One student had a difficult time believing that she, as a new professor from a working class environment, had something to offer socially and financially privileged college students.

> *… the experience of teaching these students, you know, young people who have had -- many of whom have had really privileged upbringings, really great opportunities and experiences and finding out that even though they've had all of these resources to draw on they still need something from me. It has been really illuminating for me because they do. The students like me and keep coming back even after the classes are over so that means a lot to me…*

She seems to hold no assumption that as an individual from the working class, she would have something worthwhile to offer middle and upper class college students.

The following participant appeared unable to reconcile her vastly different work environment with the work environment of her parents and most other parents she knew

growing up who did hard physical labor. She consequently questioned the legitimacy of her professional position by saying:

> *... I also have a sense that I am constantly questioning myself about whether I do anything, whether I do real work and whether it's meaningful because the work that I do is so much less concrete and about sort of the material world in a way than what I saw adults doing as a child…there's a lot of self questioning about whether what I do is real enough*

Two participants spoke specifically about their difficulty in owning and utilizing their professional titles. In a tearful response to a question about being called Doctor, the first person stated:

> *Yeah. It's pretty hard. I don't have- I still haven't adjusted to it. I mean, initially, even on internship at* (placement) *I was called Miss Parsons* (name changed to protect confidentiality). *That was disheartening cuz I kept -- you know, my image was, I kept looking around until I- like a librarian in soft-soled shoes. I was like, who's Miss Parsons? Um, and it's strange because I feel like. I mean literally you go from one minute as you know, as who you are, Susan Parsons or Ms. Parsons, and in the next you know 15 minutes later, you know, Dr. Parsons and how can that, you know, how can that happen? …But, I mean it's really a process of like internalizing that title and status and that it really is an evolution and then suddenly you arrive…*

This same individual later speaks about feeling uncomfortable with the success of her first professional position:

I mean it still feels bizarre to me that you know, people come here and pay me to listen to them. It's just like this is strange. Like the first time I was given a check I thought okay. And it still, it still feels like, Monopoly money. It doesn't feel like real money. Very strange… Um, what, what actually makes me angry with myself is for not quite feeling like it's real. It's the fact that I know I worked really hard to get here. It took a long time and so- I'm having a hard time feeling that it's real.

The other participant spoke about his conflict of wanting to feel entitled to his professional title, but not wanting to appear pretentious.

But what I find kind of awkward is I'd like to be called Doctor but I don't want to sound like I'm stuck up and I find that kind of awkward. Like when people say to me, you know, Mr. Jones (name changed to protect confidentiality)*, I sort of feel conflicted. Do I correct them and say Dr. Jones? Generally I don't but it's interesting that I do feel like I'd like to be Doctor but I feel stupid too, you know what I mean?*

Moving Toward Integration of New Identity: Axial Code

Several of the participants spoke of social mobility as a process that they were currently engaged in. This process involved the integration of their identities as individuals raised in a working class environment with their newly acquired identities as middle class intellectuals. The task of integrating these identities appeared to be a gradual process for many, involving straddling social classes, the appreciation of one's lower class roots and positive feelings about one's social mobility and, for some, a desire to give back to their family and community.

Straddling: Open code.

Several participants appeared to be engaged in the process of straddling two social worlds. Each had moved into a higher social class but many appeared unable to solidify their place in that class due to their ties to their working class environment and their continued identification with their working class selves which often conflicted with the middle class environment they were currently in. This participant clearly describes the navigation of her two social class environments in this way:

> *Um, I think, in the way I tend to think of it, it's like straddling you know I've got one foot, you know I guess in this world, profession, whatever you want to call it, and then one in another… there was kind of a fluidity like, you know, moving between worlds. And I think, I mean as hard as it can be at some times I think, I'm not sure that I would want it another way. I think probably the challenge is to integrate it better. Um, but, you know, just things like, this is all a part of me so it makes sense that, you know, to be connected to all of it.*

In response to the question asking whether or not social mobility had an impact on family relationships, another person addressed straddling by saying:

> *… I think I'm the same person socially. I don't strive to be something that I'm not, you know. I'm not the type of person who reads a lot of intellectual books, you know…If anything when I'm in a social gathering I prefer to talk about light stuff. I can talk about what's on T.V., you know. I'm very laid back…In fact I've been told that by lots of people that I'm really flexible in that way.*

The following participant echoed the previous participant's thoughts regarding flexibility in communication by stating:

> *Sometimes hanging out with my brother and I do -- I still get involved in these political discussions and things like that that are, you know, I suppress my real thoughts because I'm totally out numbered about certain issues or when it comes to the crime problem. I have a different mindset and yeah, very much, so I find myself you know, talking the way they do and losing the affected language of the classroom and just kind of talking the way we talk at home, you know. When I'm with my family I find that to be the case sometimes.*

The process of adjusting one's form of communicating appears to be similar to a code switch between the language of the middle class intellectual and the language of the working class and vice versa. Another participant spoke about straddling between her middle class world and her mother's world in this way:

> *I do think our world is so different sometimes. I think for me it causes me to live in two worlds. So it's a balancing task all the time…Well, I think it's made me very flexible. And sort of having to live in so many different worlds. So that my sense of self I think it much more broad. I mean, I think I know how to get by in a white, professional world vs. a Hispanic professional vs. what my family is vs. the poor families that I work with so I think it's made me very versatile in that sense.*

Possessing knowledge of both social worlds proved to be an asset for this participant, allowing her to successfully integrate herself in multiple social environments.

Appreciation of lower class roots: Open code.

Some of the participants were able to acknowledge some appreciation for their working class upbringing. Appreciating one's working class roots seemed to be another way in which the participants attempted to bridge the divide between the two social

classes they belonged to. Participants like this individual talked about a new-found appreciation for forgotten customs and activities of her working class past:

> *I was recently in a little tiny town in* (State) *and had the chance to go hear some local bluegrass and it's so much like in my bones from -- that's just what was, you know, in the background all the time* (at home) *and I really, really avoided that in terms of conscious, you know, attention forever but it's, it's fascinating. The tunes are in there. The lyrics are in there.*

Another participant talked about an activity indicative of his working class lifestyle that he continues doing today despite his class mobility:

> *I was always proud. I'm still proud of my blue-collar roots. And I change the oil on my car. And it's not still because I really, really have to. I get a joy out of that.*

Other participants described the ways in which their working class upbringing provided them with beneficial skills that they believe they may not have acquired had their family not struggled financially. Participants stated that their working class upbringing instilled a sense of drive, ambition and a commitment to hard work, as well as a deep appreciation for their accomplishments. Many participants also expressed an appreciation for the hard work their parents endured throughout their lives, which enabled the participants' own success as one participant stated:

> *Oh, God. You know, 95% of it has had a positive impact on me. I wouldn't trade it for the world. Again, they just, I think if anything the experiences have, have given my parents reason and appreciation for what they've done and it's given me an appreciation for what they've done.*

Positive feelings-self enrichment: Open code.

Positive feelings regarding one's social mobility were acknowledged by all of the participants. Despite the disorientation and alienation felt by some in their newly acquired middle class lifestyle, each participant was able to identify ways in which they felt positive about their status as socially mobile intellectuals and regarded their journey as a process of self-enrichment. Participants also acknowledged the positive aspects of having more financially stable lives and the ways in which this has enhanced their quality of life. As one participant stated:

> *…it's, shocking the amount of privilege that I have and I'm very aware of it all the time. I'm, I'm completely stunned that I'm buying my house. That's my house. I'm not renting. I'm stunned at all the kinds of things that I get to do. I'm stunned at the cushy job that I have and the fun people that I get to hang out with and so there are lots of ways where it's, you know, it's very. It's positive. It's certainly easier. I'm really, really, really glad that I know I can pay my bills this month. I know that there are not a lot of people that I feel who have*[PF3] *-- that there are big chunks of my experience and my perspective that I think are shared by very, very few people…*

This participant and several others spoke about their financial security with such pride and wonderment. Many were excited about the possibilities a higher income afforded them.

Other participants expressed a pride in themselves and their ability to triumph over adversity and move into the middle class lifestyle. One participant stated:

> *I really feel like I finally got what I wanted. It is very rewarding, especially getting a job and being on a tenure track. I feel like, this is what -- I finally arrived, you know. I'm doing what I always wanted to do…Suddenly all the noise about what are you gonna do next year is gone. It's really nice. I feel the prestige of it. Students refer to me as professor. I love that. I feel good about it. Really good thing.*

Several participants were also able to acknowledge and appreciate the social mobility struggle and attribute its difficulties to their success and sense of personal fulfillment. As one participant stated:

> *On the positive side I do feel very accomplished meaning -- I don't mean so much in like what I have, but a sense of inner strength. A real sense of groundedness. I don't like -- I don't shake up that easily. Just a sense of having gotten through a lot and therefore feeling like I can -- a sense of being up for whatever challenge has come. And what else? You know, a real sense of resiliency. But of course it's been challenging*.

Social Mobility Experience and Effect on the Self: Selective Code Summary

The two dimensions of this selective code represent a potential developmental progression similar to those posited by racial identity theorists, for example. This selective code demonstrates a beginning, more conflicted point of social class identity disintegration then progresses toward a gradual process of social class identity integration. The participants did not necessarily experience one or the other dimension of this code exclusively but rather spoke about passing through many of open code categories and struggling with them to varying degrees.

Effect of Social Mobility on Family Relationships: Selective Code

The movement from the working class into the middle class was met with varying responses from the participants' families. Participants reported that their family members either appeared to struggle with their new social position and the differences in themselves or an absence of conflict was experienced indicating a tolerance for these changes.

Inability to Integrate Middle Class Identity: Axial Code

Participants talked about the ways in which their current lifestyle, values, interests, thought processes, emotional reactions, and customs differed vastly from their family of origin due to social mobility. Families were unable to integrate the socially mobile intellectual's new middle class identity into their family culture. This disconnection of experience often served to distance the participants from the family members they know and love. For some, this distance was painful and disorienting while others saw it as a casualty of war, the war being the battle between their two social cultures.

Success as Rejection of Family of Origin: Open code.

Participants spoke about a range of conflicting differences between themselves and their families of origin that emerged since attaining social mobility. Some reported that the conflicting differences ranging from differences in food and entertainment preferences, to differences in values, parenting styles, and goals, were perceived as a rejection by the family of origin, tantamount to class/family defection. The following example of success as rejection is lengthy, but begging the reader's forgiveness, will be presented to illustrate how simple differences between participants and their families became complex and imbued with powerful negative emotions:

> *We had a surprise 70th birthday party for my Mom and there was a whole lot of food there but there was very little in the way of, you know, fresh vegetables and all the vegetables are really expensive. And so they, they eat canned vegetables and frozen vegetables and …I remember like finding in my sister's refrigerator a lone beautiful red bell pepper and I said, hey, can I, you know, is this up for grabs? And she said, do what you want, whatever's in the refrigerator. So I took out this bell pepper and I was standing there and talking to my Mom and a couple of my sisters and somebody else and while we were talking I was slicing the pepper and I was making out of this brisket this nice little burrito that I put a lot of sliced peppers into it and a couple of other things and somewhere in the middle of this process somebody said, I don't remember the specific thing anymore but basically it was something very cutting about how I had to make such a big deal out of my food and the, the thing of taking so much time to prepare my little burrito was really irritating to them and it was both about I think, it was about not just putting what was there on my plate and eating it but needing to sort of transform it somehow so they felt like my doing that was again, was like, oh our food isn't good enough for you. I stepped outside of the box in a variety of ways. I was taking too much time with my food. I was doing this thing that was unnecessary when there was this beautiful pile of brisket and some potato salad right there for me to eat.*

The participant responded with feelings of pain, rejection and some anger to this encounter while the family responded with similar emotions. The sense that one's differences oppose one's family, which consequently causes the family to feel judged and

then to react by rejecting some aspect of the participants' new life and tastes were common in the interviews. Participants also talked about the sadness felt at knowing that their relatives continued to live in severely disadvantaged conditions. They described guilt and anguish connected to their inability to help in significant ways.

Conflicting Differences: Open code.

Alienation, for many, was reported in situations in which the participant's interests, ideals and customs fell so far outside of the repertoire of their family that a clear barrier existed in connecting their experiences. Several participants stated that it became very difficult for their family to appreciate their new identity and new social culture, while the participants themselves found it hard to revert back to their working class identity and social culture once they had obtained social mobility.

Social mobility for the following participant created a shift in values that was difficult to manage and integrate with those of the person's family of origin. This particular individual struggled with disagreeing with existing family values while trying to respect them at the same time:

> *I think that I'm, I sort of go back and forth between being critical of the way they see things and then catching myself in trying to understand that and feeling badly about even being critical about it. So there's the back and forth of like trying to make sense of things. Of their opinions vs. mine. So it's a balancing task all the time. I alternate between wanting to be closer and wanting to be farther away. And it's sort of a, always a work in progress.*

Participant's spoke about their family's inability to truly understand their graduate studies while they were in school. This lack of understanding transferred then to the workplace

following graduation. The following interview excerpt demonstrates the way in which one participant describes her family's inability to understand her work.

> *So again they were, they were supportive sort of generally but other than* (Sibling who attended graduate school) *none of them have ever actually understood what it was that I was doing. That at that point my work had become more and more esoteric to them to an extent that they didn't really ask me about my work or talk with me about my work because it just didn't have very much meaning for them anymore…*

She touches upon the distance created by the social mobility divide that pulls her and her family further and further apart from each other. Another participant described the differences between herself and her father created by social mobility in this way:

> *I guess the limiting things or the things that I see that mark us differently it's not with respect to intelligence or you know, um, that kind of thing. I guess it is more these other parts in life. My father has no interest in the opera. No interest in music. No interest in reading literature of any kind. They just, all those dimensions they're just, we cannot communicate on those things. Like that. He'd rather shoot himself in the foot probably than go to an opera or something. I mean, it's just that dimension that's completely different.*

Social Class Differences Tolerated by Family: Axial Code

A few of the participants reported that their current relationships with their families indicated an ability by their family members to accept the participant's social mobility and incorporate, to the best of the family's ability, the individual's new lifestyle,

values, and social customs into the family structure while maintaining a close familial bond.

Family able to integrate class differences: Open code.

Participants spoke about maintaining close ties with their families unencumbered by negative reactions and feelings related to their social mobility. Those who did report a sense of acceptance from their family talked about an absence of competition as well as some interest from their family members in their profession and middle class environment. As one participant stated when asked about any class conflicts between herself and her father:

> *Um, um, I mean, it's something that I've thought about and I think all of us and all of the siblings were sensitive to that and um, I'm not sure how he* (Father) *feels about it but, um, I, I don't think it causes problem. It's -- I've never heard a word spoken about it, in anger or otherwise that brings that point up. I think my father is comfortable, very comfortable with where he is. You know, what I'm saying? I think he has a lot of confidence and he's proud of what he's done. I don't think he needs to compare himself to his children.*

No differences felt: Open Code.

Other participants attributed their family's acceptance of their social mobility to their own consistent attitude and value system, which constituted a concerted effort by the participant to perceive themselves as unchanged. As one participant explains:

> *I think they see me in the same class as them, it's just that I wound up getting this degree and I have, you know, a fancy job title so I don't, I don't sense any*

difference. I don't feel different from them. They don't treat me any differently. No difference when it comes to class.

Some participants made a concerted effort to make sure that they did not deviate too much from the family class culture while others simply had a naturally modest entry to middle class life, which was easy for the family to adapt to. Still others came from families that were flexible enough to expand and contract accordingly, thereby accepting the social class changes in the participant without experiencing them as aversive or alien.

Effect of Social Mobility on Family Relationships: Selective Code Summary

Unlike the selective code for the effect of social mobility on the self, this selective code does not represent a developmental progression, but rather fixed dimensional poles. The data indicate that participants described their families as generally accepting or not accepting of their new social position and social class identity as a highly educated, middle class individual. Exploration into the genesis of these dimensions would require in-depth interviews with family members, which was outside the scope of the present study.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study presented in this chapter indicate that social mobility via education produces a rich range of experience for the individuals involved. The data suggest that this is not an unconflicted process -- rather, great conflict appears to be inherent. Additionally, tremendous growth and change within the socially mobile individual appears to have occurred. The following chapter will discuss the major findings in this study and will reconcile them with the existing literature. New theory will

be presented which will put the findings of this study into context and, hopefully, inform future research and clinical practice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study aimed to discover the effects of social mobility via education on identity and family relationships by addressing the following research questions, which will be addressed throughout this discussion: 1) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's identity? 2) What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's relationships with family members? 3) What effect does social mobility have on the participant's identity? and 4)What effect does social mobility have on the participant's relationships with family members? Participants were asked to describe the process of attaining a doctoral degree as a person from the working class with specific focus on how the process of earning this degree caused changes in the self and changes in family relationships. Additionally, participants were asked to reflect upon their movement to a middle or upper class social stratum and the ways in which this process affected the self and relationships with family members, most of whom have remained in the working class. A grounded theory approach was utilized in order to allow the data to emerge from the words of the participants, unimposed by preconceived hypotheses.

Some participants remarked that the topic of social mobility via education was one that they had not contemplated deeply before. A few were initially reticent to engage the material, then after a period of warming up to the interviewer moved to self disclosure and contemplation. Some participants were moved to tears during the interview, surprising even themselves by the level of affect attached to this topic. Still others spoke about their education and social mobility journey in a comfortable manner as if the subject were not new to them. Though each participant recalled experiences and

responses unique to them, in this heterogeneous group of 13 individuals, however, it appears as though more similarities than differences arose across race, ethnicity, culture, gender and age. Nevertheless, this study did not examine possible similarities or differences across these dimensions in a systematic way and therefore no definitive conclusions can be made as to this assumption. Further analyses of these data in future studies could yield important information.

Research Question #1:

What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's identity?

As the data from the review of participants' responses to the effect of education on their identity have suggested, there appears to be a clear impact of higher education on the lives of students from the working class. The participants each expressed the sense that social mobility via education is a unique experience that does not fully correspond with the usual and expected reactions to success in education and financial stability that persons raised in middle or upper social classes would experience. The participants overwhelmingly supported the idea that it is essentially difficult, but not impossible to *go home again* following the completion of their social mobility journey. Knowledge, for many, was a type of enlightenment exposing the participants to new ways of thinking and interacting with their world. The effects of this enlightenment served to move them further away from their families of origin primarily because the participants moved into a place of knowing and being that was often so vastly different from their working class origins. Change in all individuals, internally and in relation to their families is a normal aspect of adult development and the family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980).

However, the specific changes that occurred in these highly educated, socially mobile individuals appear to have been unexpected by both participant and family, which gave little opportunity for preparation. The participants in the study described changes in themselves noticed during and after their graduate studies. These changes had such a profound impact on most of the participants that for themselves and those who knew them prior to graduate school, the differences in self became tantamount to an identity shift. The introduction of higher education as a catalyst of social, economic, and intellectual change was a constant in all interviews. What varied were the ways in which each participant conceptualized and reacted to these changes as well as the ways in which the participant perceived that his or her family members conceptualized and reacted to these changes. Most participants, as well as their family and close friends, became acutely aware of these changes as higher education progressed. Participants and family members were first faced with the reality that the process of becoming highly educated produced a change in the self encompassing ideals, morals, values, customs, attitudes, beliefs, speech patterns and thought processes. The next major change for the socially mobile intellectual and their family members was the financial and class shift that placed them in the position to possess more and have more opportunities than their family. As a result of these major life changes, the data show that feelings of both pride and alienation between the individual and family frequently emerged in the themes in the participants' accounts of their educational and social mobility journey.

The process of becoming an educated person appears to have had both positive and negative effects on the identities of nearly all of the participants as this complicated journey proved to be a rich, multidimensional experience replete with both triumphs and

disappointments. The positive aspects of success, enrichment and growth are expected and applauded, but it is the confusion and conflict produced by the differences between the working class identity and the identity of a middle class intellectual that becomes a source of disorientation and disintegration. As Barbara Jensen states, “There is suffering in this private passage, unvoiced and unseen, a particularly confused suffering in the midst of outward success” (p.170).

Participants who generally experienced their upbringing in the working class as a social and interpersonal burden that placed them at a disadvantage experienced the sense of feeling at a disadvantage in a more profound way during their graduate education. The markers of being in a disadvantaged social class in graduate school were no longer similar to those of childhood. As children, participants worried about their lack of new, store bought clothing, the absence of fancy toys and school supplies and living in the wrong neighborhood. In contrast, the markers of social class in academia were less outward and more internal, exposing deficits in upbringing and education that were revealed through inadequate verbal skills, difficulties in critical thinking, lack of agency, poor social skills, and an inability to navigate the politics of the academic system. Participants found themselves in classrooms unable to function on the same level as their middle and upper class counterparts, feeling as though they were missing some vital piece of information that the other middle class students were privy to.

The students who enter graduate school, regardless of what social class they belong to, by virtue of being accepted into a graduate program have demonstrated excellent academic skills and intellectual capacity in their undergraduate education. Yet, for many of the working class intellectuals interviewed, the deficits revealed in the new

graduate academic environment brought about what I've labeled a "crisis of competency." This crisis is characterized by self-doubt and feelings of intellectual inferiority coupled with a diminished sense of agency and lack of entitlement. The markers of social class in academia for these individuals were perceived as deficits of mind, which represent deficits of the self. Some participants described often paralyzing feelings of inadequacy and confusion experienced in their graduate classrooms as they observed the other middle and upper class students revealing knowledge and relating in ways that seemed beyond their capability. In turn, the crisis of competency seems largely to derive from the experience of feeling at a disadvantage due to one's social class, particularly because of the lack of cultural capital for these individuals. The crisis seemed most painful for those who spoke about the ways in which they were disadvantaged specifically due to their parents' lack of formal education. Though these participants didn't openly blame their parents for their low educational status, there was a sense of hopelessness and resignation felt by the participants as they lamented the lost possibilities of privilege had their parents' lives been different.

In academia, what can be most shaming is a failure of intellect. Participants who spoke about feeling at a disadvantage in their doctoral programs also seemed to be speaking about shame, though few actually uttered this specific word. Working class individuals have a difficult time admitting to feeling ashamed of their background though these feelings are often glaringly evident. Shame signifies a defection or breech of loyalty. Working class cultures tend to value conformity and loyalty, producing a painful dilemma for the one who feels shame or defects and joins the ranks of the middle class (Xiao, 2000; Gorman, 1998; Jensen, 2004). The painful, embarrassing and diminishing

effects of shame strip one of power and self-esteem and disable the ability to access feelings of entitlement. The working class intellectuals in this study appear to manage feelings of shame and being disadvantaged by concealing differences from those in the academic world who are not like them, thus averting exposure or an 'outing' of sorts. The crisis of competency stemming from feeling at a disadvantage also prompted the working class students in this study to manage their identity by passing or faking it through middle class academia until their identity as middle class intellectuals became crystallized, a strategy of working class students found also by Granfield (1991). The fear of being discovered as an imposter or fraud results in tremendous anxiety. Participants spoke of coping with this anxiety by keeping various secrets and concealing their self-perceived deficits. Unfortunately, this defensive and protective response also served to prevent them from benefiting from assistance. Few risked asking the vital questions that would have filled in their information gaps, because to do so would have risked discovery.

Research on social class and childrearing behaviors has found that the parenting styles of the working class are generally characterized by a focus on conformity and obedience rather than autonomy and the development of self-determination (Gerris, Dekovic & Janssens, 1997). Therefore, the working class students in this study may not have been encouraged by their families to challenge authority or conventional thinking and formulate their own opinions and subsequently discuss these opinions, which are skills vital to the academic world. Social class bestows knowledge upon its children. Class membership opens the door to gain access to knowledge on several different levels, whether it is the financial access to knowledge or the cultural capital needed to know how to secure it. Participants reported feeling as though their middle and upper class

counterparts in academia possessed abilities and an established knowledge set regarding how to navigate the world of academia that they, as students from the working class, just did not have. Not only is academia filled with middle and upper class students, but it is also populated by middle and upper class professors who often do not take into account the diverse mix of social classes represented by the students in their classrooms and often fail to adjust their teaching style and rhetoric accordingly (Granfield, 1991). Participants reported few sources of support and guidance within their graduate institutions to assist them in their process of acclimatization.

Privilege affords both middle and upper class persons a sense of entitlement that those in the working and lower classes often do not possess. The sense of feeling at a disadvantage for these working class students was difficult enough. This, combined with the internal conflict produced by the clash of two class cultures to which the participants now belonged, to a greater or lesser degree, served to paralyze many of them at times, making it difficult for them to advocate for themselves and enact change in the middle and upper class establishments of academia. Participants lacked the impetus, the words, even the cognition to make sure their needs were met. Learning the rules of engagement in academia required an acculturative process in addition to a learning process.

The results of this study suggest that social mobility via education appears to be a process similar to acculturation. Each person came from a working class background, attained a Ph.D. and entered into middle class society thereby attaining social mobility. The meaning and ease of that mobility, however, varied for each individual. Garza-Guerrero's (1974) theory regarding coping with culture shock is relevant to understanding the process of coping with acculturating to another class, in that social

class mobility was experienced by the participants as a new environment complete with new rituals, values, language, geographic region, and beliefs. The self in the new class was viewed as having different behaviors, cognitions, attitudes and values. Participants appeared to experience acculturative stress in the social mobility journey expressed through feelings of loss, marginality, alienation, fragmentation, disorientation and identity confusion, which is consistent with theories of culture shock and acculturation (Berry, 1995; Garza-Guerrero, 1974).

Not all of the participants experienced higher education as a loss, however. In fact, the majority of the participants were able to utilize flexibility and ego strength to integrate the changes of identity. The success and accomplishment of higher education appears to have had a reparative effect on those participants who found the acclimatization to academia to be disorienting but not disarming. These individuals looked back on their struggles not only in graduate school, but in their working class childhoods and characterized them as positive learning experiences that further strengthened their resolve to succeed in their careers. The sense of empowerment and the presence of resilience, resulting from overcoming adversity and pressing onward, strengthened the belief in the self and the self's abilities. Some participants reported increased confidence, a strong work ethic and a sincere appreciation for education and the privileges it afforded them and demonstrated less guilt, disconnection and disintegration. Those who were able to maintain an integrated sense of identity and who reported positive effects of education on their sense of self tended to report support and encouragement from their families. The majority of these participants also stated that their families valued education and the benefits of educational achievement. The family

support appears to have provided a buffer between the potentially disorienting and disempowering effect of middle class academia. These individuals did not have to choose to defect from their working class origins due to their own ability and the ability of their family members to maintain close connections despite the changes resulting from gaining a higher education.

Many participants received some type of support or encouragement from their family for their decision to attend graduate school. This study indicates that though support was given, it often did not necessarily fulfill the needs of the participant. The lack of true understanding of the graduate experience and the stressors resulting from graduate study impeded the ability of the participants' family members to provide adequate support. The support that family members often gave was provided within their familiar repertoire, and scope of knowledge regarding how to support and care for an other. It was then left up to the participant to either appreciate the offerings and see them as genuine gestures of caring or reject them as unsatisfactory. Participants reported that family members sent touching cards, bought groceries for them, made them meals and provided words of encouragement. Those participants who acknowledged the efforts of support and fully appreciated them though they were also able to recognize the ways in which the support often missed the mark, tended to be the same participants who were able to maintain a more integrated sense of identity throughout the process of being educated . Several participants stated that though the process of earning a graduate degree was difficult, many of their family members, particularly parents, expressed great pride in their academic achievements and expressed affirmation for their new identity as a socially mobile intellectual.

Research Question #2:

What effect does the process of becoming highly educated have on the participant's relationships with family members?

None of the participants in the study had college-educated parents. Therefore, the academic world from the undergraduate level onward was an unknown environment for these individuals and their parents. As first generation college students and then graduate students these working class intellectuals, with great strength and courage, stepped out of their familiar environment into the middle class environment of academia. Entry into academia required the eventual adaptation of an educated middle class identity. For some family members, the individual's new identity as a highly educated person represented a stance that was too far outside of the realm of the familiar to integrate comfortably. Education became a threat to the status quo of the family, a threat to the hierarchical structure of parent and child (Steinglass, 1987). Upward social mobility through the acquisition of knowledge placed a great deal of distance between parents and their adult children in such a way that those involved experienced difficulty negotiating the new terms of the hierarchy. Baker (1989) found that parents, particularly fathers, may experience the academic and social success of their children as narcissistic injuries related to an Oedipal victory. Education and social mobility no longer becomes a positive endeavor but a threat to the integrity of the family unit. A few of the participants in this study spoke of feelings of competition between their siblings but mentioned no obvious indications of competition with their parents. What the participants did report, however, was increasing distance between themselves and their parents. Silence became the

defensive maneuver of choice to manage the alienation, discomfort, anger, resentment, guilt, envy, and rejection.

Carolyn Leste Law's (1995) quote at the beginning of this manuscript became alarmingly relevant as the data from the participants began to unfold. The quote will be reiterated here:

> *In my trajectory from working-class family of origin to the threshold of middle-class professional status, I have suffered a loss my present context doesn't even recognize as a loss; my education has destroyed something even while it has been recreating me in its own image* (p. 1).

Some of the participants indeed echoed Leste Law's words and in their own narratives revealed similar destruction and loss. Social mobility appears to have destroyed something in the self and something within the family relationship that many have not yet been able to repair. The destructive element for participants in this study emerged as alienation. Alienation is one's sense of feeling strange, different or separated from others (Reber, 1995). Participants felt alienated from their familial and societal origins and experienced alienation within their newly acquired middle class society. Many experienced a disconnection of experience when trying to integrate their working class selves with the new socially mobile selves. Alienation was experienced as a painful separation from family and the familiar. Alienation was also experienced as loss. The data indicate that alienation can have a destructive effect on the closeness a socially mobile individual has with his or her family often due to an inability to relate their new level of advanced education as well as their new lives as middle class individuals.

Distance was created in the relationships between some of the participants and their families due to the family's inability to comprehend the participant's academic world.

None of the participants talked about their families rejecting their graduate studies altogether or an outright lack of support. What occurred in these families may have been actually more injurious. Many of the negative responses to the changes in the participants due to education manifested themselves as covert or defensive maneuvers by many of the family members. The process involved distancing, misunderstanding, alienation and an inability to relate to the other. The result was often silence, some denigration of the participant and their educational pursuits and a general sense of disconnection. Sadly, neither the participants nor their family members seemed to openly acknowledge the pain of the distance created. For many family members, the participant's new identity as a highly educated individual represented a stance that was too far outside of the realm of the familiar to integrate comfortably, and a loss too difficult and painful to address openly. Seeing this success in their offspring may have ignited an unconscious, maladaptive homeostatic response in which the adult child's academic success is met with disapproval. To celebrate it could mean that the parents would have to cope with their own unmet needs for academic or professional success as described in Johnson and Szurek's (1952) theory of the unconscious wishes of parents to maintain family homeostasis.

Some family members were able to maintain a connection despite not understanding the participants' studies or new academic environment, which is consistent with the conformist parents in the Gorman (1998) study. Other family members chose to ignore the presence of the degree and the effects of the changes on the individual for the

sake of maintaining the relationship. Those who reported less conflict in integrating their highly educated identities within their family of origin tended to have parents who valued education more and perceived their own social class as a place of belonging rather than a burden or shame. There was a general sense of acceptance and flexibility without the intense fear of change and loss. Those participants who did not report overwhelming support from their families tended to report that their families preferred to overlook their academic accomplishments or took a passive, apathetic or disinterested stance.

Research Question #3:

What effect does social mobility have on the participant's identity?

For each participant in this study, education, which separated them in various ways from their families of origin, was followed by social and economic mobility which, for some, placed an even wider divide between the participants and their families. In the same way in which education caused a crisis of competency, social mobility, professional and financial success caused some participants to experience a crises of identity disintegration representing a failure to integrate the working class with the middle class identity.

In 1972, Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb published their book entitled *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. In it, they chronicled the external and internal conflict of the American blue-collar, working class. The book not only exposed the social indignities and hardships experienced by these individuals, but took an intimate look at the wishes, dreams, ideals and emotions of working class people. Sennett and Cobb (1972) discovered that the working class identity is strong and enduring despite social mobility, which serves as a benefit as well as detriment to the individual. The present study,

however, revealed that an individual's working class identity, or concept of self can be altered by social class mobility. Through the effort to acclimate to working within middle class society, shifts in behavior were necessary. Participants also noticed that even before they began working, their values, interests, speech patterns and leisure activities had already begun to change. This is consistent with Sorokin's (1959) book on social mobility, which states that change in social and economic status prompts a change in body, and mind. For the participants in this study, the changes came with both positive and negative feelings and reactions to their new status as middle class citizens.

Unique to this population and to the participants in this study in particular is an inability to take ownership of success (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). Many educated individuals who grew up in the working class have internalized, whether conscious or unconscious, a clear hierarchical ideal that places them at the lower stratum. This placement, for many, has a tremendous negative impact on the sense of self, causing feelings of inferiority, self-doubt, inadequacy and an inability to feel a sense of entitlement. Participants painfully recounted their experience of being unable to speak their minds, advocate for themselves, and an inability to accept and fully actualize their academic and professional success. Questioning success, for some, stemmed from continued feelings of being at a disadvantage due to their working class upbringing in addition to an inability to feel entitled to their success. It seems as though it is akin to a learned helplessness.

Sennett and Cobb (1972) described the ways in which workers utilized the passive voice when describing promotions and other accomplishments on the job. Success appeared to be something that happened to people, not something that was actively

pursued and earned. The authors found that the loss of the word "I" when describing occupational success warded off social isolation. By not owning up to actively pursuing success, the allegiance to one's working class origins remains intact. The desertion that occurs by moving into a higher social class comes by the actions and appointments of others, not by one's own doing, thereby staving off the social isolation that would occur as a result of class defection (Sennett and Cobb, 1972). For the participants in this study, the questioning of legitimacy and inability to own their success appears to be rooted in Sennett and Cobb's (1972) ideals of social isolation, which for these individuals would also mean isolation from their own families. Additionally, questioning one's legitimacy also appears to be caused by a true lack of knowledge related to how an educated person conducts themselves in a middle class society, yet another disadvantage resulting from growing up in the working class.

Questioning legitimacy appeared to be one of the most insidious results of social mobility representing the highest form of disintegration and emotional pain. The two participants who spoke the most about questioning the legitimacy of their accomplishments shared several key experiences. Both participants felt overwhelming disadvantages throughout their time in graduate school, particularly intellectual deficits and a lack of resourcefulness, manifesting themselves by clear difficulties in verbalizing their needs and having them met in school. Both individuals experienced the alienating effects of their elevated educational position within their families of origin. Both participants also reported anger, frustration and sadness resulting from the loss experienced due to alienation. Finally each participant also reported continued alienation within their families of origin now that they had attained their degree and were working

in the field. It is possible that the position of inferiority may have been internalized in early childhood and then reinforced in graduate school as well as in their middle class lives.

Those who were successful in or appeared to be less conflicted about the process of social mobility spoke about straddling their two social class worlds, maintaining allegiances to both. These individuals also tended to acknowledge an appreciation of their working class roots and feel a sense of pride related to their accomplishments including their financial success. Acknowledging an appreciation for working class roots grounds the self and the identity and becomes a vital step in the process of stabilizing one's social class identity. Social mobility often prompts the working class individual to idealize the values, customs and culture of the middle class. Some participants talked about looking back on what they missed out on as a child, or fantasizing about how much better their lives could have been if only they had the financial means and opportunity of the middle and upper classes.

Formulating an authentic identity that incorporates both the working and middle class identities is a difficult challenge. Still there is the question as to whether one truly becomes middle class or is just 'passing' in a more highly valued social stratus (Langston, 1995). Baker (1998) states that a healthy level of balance and cohesion of identities becomes essential in avoiding fragmentation in the socially mobile. The present study indicates the importance of flexibility of self in multiple environments. Straddling appears to help bridge the culture of each social world while the appreciation of one's lower class roots appeared to lesson the idealization of the middle class and the devaluation of the working class which is, in essence, a devaluation of the self. The type

of flexibility or straddling the participants spoke of that was most beneficial was that which enabled them to feel truly part of the environment they were in without having to fully abandon the other. For one participant, straddling appeared to be difficult because she experienced it as a painful split, causing her to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

The use of straddling is consistent with acculturation studies that show that successful resolution of acculturative stress involves the integration of the two cultures within the self (Garza-Guerrero, 1974). Feelings of pride for one's social mobility struggle as well as one's educational and professional accomplishments also appeared to aid in the process of integrating both social identities.

Research Question #4:

What effect does social mobility have on the participant's relationships with family members?

Most people have no expectation that success can be damaging. With this in mind the participants and their family members seemed to be operating often unaware of the damage academic and financial success was wreaking on their family relationships. Baker (1989) states that working class parents in his study had experienced tremendous humiliation and subjugation at the hands of their middle class superiors in the workplace and feared that their children were doomed to become one of 'them' the dominating upper class. Therefore, the injuries of class inflicted by outsiders were thought to be potentially reenacted inside the family between adult child and parent. The familial hierarchy that many working class parents rely on to fortify their parental role is then broken down and these parents are left with few resources regarding how to reconstruct

it. Social class is more about the access to power than it is about financial success alone, which is only one means of attaining or displaying power. Within working class families strong hierarchical structures exist separating the parental role as the authoritative head of the family from the child role, including the adult child. The injury of class represented by the powerlessness of the worker compared to the educated boss is recreated within the household between the adult socially mobile child and his or her parent. As Baker (1989) describes, reaction to the participant's success could be dependent upon the parent's accumulation and internalization of the hidden injuries of class.

Feelings of alienation related to social class mobility and professional success were reported by seven of the 13 participants. Some reported that, at times, they could feel comfortable and competent with their middle class identities in their middle class lives. At other times they could go home and feel comfortable with the class culture of their families of origin. However, when conflicts arose between the two, an internal battle ensued. The internal battle of working class and middle class identities is representative of the age-old power struggle and rules of allegiance between the worker and the capitalist (Wright, 2000). To claim one over the other may be experienced as an act of treason. Favoring the middle class identity often caused the participants to feel as though they were betraying part of themselves as well as their families of origin. Integrating the two disparate identities is an emotionally difficult task that, for many, has yet to be accomplished. Most participants opted for separate, discrete identities. A select few, however, did manage to feel whole in each social environment foregoing the need to switch social class hats as they walked in the door. Those who integrated their socially mobile identity with their working class identity tended to have families who provided

clear support and were openly accepting and proud of their education and professional accomplishments. There was not a high experience of cognitive dissonance, nor was there an intense feeling of loss with these individuals essentially because the participant didn't have to move away from their families in order to experience intellectual and economic growth. The families remained flexible and accommodating.

The succession of generations has been described as a process involving unconscious parricidal wishes (Atkins, 1970; Baker, 1989, Loewald, 2000). A child who succeeds in life and goes further up the social, educational and/or financial ladder than his or her parents essentially murders the parental authority thus violating the hierarchical relationship between parent and child and rendering the parent ineffective. As Loewald (2000) explains, feelings of guilt then form in the child prompting an atonement for the parricidal offense. By superceding their families in education and social class, adult children also potentially deal a narcissistic blow to their parents that parents must contend with, resulting in either the promotion or destruction of their child's progression toward success. In this study, participants stated that their families responded to their financial success and social class mobility in much the same way as they reacted to their educational success. Some participants reported that their families felt judged and evaluated by them. Others stated that their own morals, values and ideals often clashed with those of their family creating conflict and further distance. Participants, in response, reported experiencing guilt related to their success and often attempted to atone by avoiding conflict, which often meant avoiding discussions about their new and divergent lifestyle.

There is an expectation in most parents that their children will do better than them financially and, for many, on an educational level as well. This expectation is brought to the fore when an adult child achieves social mobility via education and then becomes gainfully employed in their field of study. A family's ability to accommodate this success while still maintaining some degree of stability in family roles is challenging. The results of this study indicate that the family must surpass the fear of judgment and comparison to forge a bond with the socially mobile individual. Social mobility challenges the morphostatic balance in a family in that it causes both an internal and external disturbance in the family structure (Steinglass, 1987). The degree of flexibility with which the family and the adult socially mobile child meet this challenge guides the family's ability to accommodate the change of social class mobility.

Case Summaries

Marina:

Marina is a 39 year-old Caucasian woman from a very large family in rural, Central United States. Marina earned her Ph.D. degree in sociomedical sciences and works as a researcher and an assistant professor in a fairly elite university. Both the participant's parents graduated from the 10th grade in the 1930's, which at that time was considered to be the equivalent of a high school diploma. As a child, Marina's father divided his time between his own landscaping business and shoveling snow in the winters. Marina's mother was primarily a homemaker and bookkeeper for her husband's business, but when finances were tough she took various jobs as a secretary and nurse's aid. At times both parents worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. The family home was situated in a neighborhood surrounded by other families of similar working class status. However, Marina also stated that she and many of her family members identified with the middle class through their ideals, actions and speech patterns.

In descriptions of Marina's childhood she rarely spoke about feeling at a disadvantage due to the family's limited finances, but did endorse a significant amount of shame. The participant was ashamed of her father particularly because of the way in which he carried the markers of the working class, and was not ashamed enough to conceal them from the outside world. She clearly stated that her father and his family were "trashy". By high-school, the participant entered into a school district that exposed her to more individuals from higher social classes than her own at which time she began to do "impression management" by not allowing friends over to her home in order to keep clear evidence of her class status concealed.

Marina stated that her parents had expectations of success for her and her siblings throughout grammar school, but their expectations ended there. Some of her siblings dropped out of high school with little encouragement from the parents to continue their education. Marina, however, was clearly a self-directed learner from early on. The participant decided to go away for college and was the first child to do so. She recalls her parents interpreting many of her choices, including the one to leave home for college, as a judgment of them. Her decisions apparently made them feel as though they were not good enough and that she was attempting to separate herself from them. .

The participant attended an elite, private undergraduate university on scholarship and reported experiencing a sense of denigration and being misunderstood in her academic environment due to her social class status. Marina's anger related to specific incidents of feeling disadvantaged is evident in her interview.

In graduate school, the participant demonstrated somewhat haughty claims of superiority as evidenced by her disdainful evaluation of her peers and colleagues. She recalls various pejorative statements from her family in regards to her graduate education. Someone in her family described her as a "professional student". Marina also states that her mother said that graduate school was an "avoidance of growing up", while at the same time, the participant makes a vague statement describing some support from the family stating, "they were supportive sort of generally", without offering any specific examples. She did describe one older sibling, however, who had also completed a graduate degree and who was clearly supportive. This participant describes the conflicting differences and feelings of alienation as a "disconnection of experience". Her reaction to her family's inability to understand her studies was characterized by self-

censorship and silence. Marina was also able to mention some assets gained from her working class upbringing such as her ability to manage arguments and engage in "verbal sparring" as well as an ability to feel comfortable stating her opinions. However, despite these assets, she spoke in a very painful way about the difficulty she experienced in navigating the politics of academia and being able to ask for the resources that she needed and was entitled to.

In her professional position and as a middle class woman, the participant described a sense of feeling fraudulent. She questioned her legitimacy in very poignant ways by asking, for example, whether or not the work she did had meaning because it was much less concrete than the work she saw adults doing as a child. In the interview, when the participant was asked to describe her family's perception of the upper class growing up, she stated that the general view her family held was that the upper classes reached their elevated class status by cheating. Marina struggled with this idea of cheating to gain success and questioned the legitimacy of her own achievements. Though she spoke of feeling a sense of pride in her accomplishments and reported an increase in confidence, she also mentioned some guilt related to being more successful than her parents and other family members clearly evidenced by her attempts to conceal the ways in which she would spend her money. Marina also commented on how different her life was from her family of origin. In the same way that her move from home to an out-of state university was perceived as a judgment, the participant's academic and financial success including the changes in identity that accompanied this success were perceived by most of her family members as a rejection of them. Despite Marina's less than enthusiastic support from her family, she is the only participant who spoke about giving

back to her family, supporting family members financially as well as her worries about the lack of education in the newer generations of her family. Marina also spoke fondly of the process of moving toward a stage in which she was able to begin appreciating her working class roots after admitting to spending so many years trying to avoid this aspect of her upbringing.

Emily:

Emily is a 29 year-old Caucasian woman who grew up with two siblings in a largely suburban environment on the East Coast. She earned her Ph.D. in educational psychology and is employed as a school psychologist. Emily grew up in a heterogeneous community populated by working, middle and upper class families. Both of the participant's parents are high school graduates. Emily's father attended trade school following high school. Emily's mother was a housewife and did not work outside the home, while Emily's father supported the family with his earnings as a draftsman.

Emily recalls that the family struggled financially throughout her childhood. They were able to afford the basics of food and clothing, but could not afford a decent car that operated properly or any extras such as after school activities that required fees or vacations that were more than a short car ride away. The participant said that she felt less privileged, but did not show any disturbances in her discourse that would indicate an unresolved state. She experiences the feeling of being disadvantaged but doesn't become consumed or preoccupied by it.

Emily states that her parents didn't focus too intensely on the children's education. She reported that they were always proud of her achievements but did not

push her at all to pursue higher education. In fact, Emily stated that when she told her parents that she wanted to leave home to attend college, they attempted to bribe her to get her to stay nearby. Her mother told her, "Why don't you just get a job?". Her parents were skeptical of her majoring in psychology because they worried that there would not be enough jobs following graduation. The participant stated that she really didn't consult with her parents regarding her education because she felt that they were not able to give her much guidance in that area. Emily stated that she did, however, get support and guidance from the parents of her more affluent friends in high school and during her undergraduate years. She utilized these people as resources without making comparative value judgments between them and her own parents.

As with her undergraduate education, Emily made the decision to enter graduate school without the help or influence of her family, but from professors and the parents of her friends. In graduate school, Emily acknowledged some weakness in her ability to speak publicly in class which she readily attributed to her working class status. She described the difficulty of knowing that the upper class students in graduate school were able to conduct themselves in a public forum better than she, however, with great awareness she puts this into context and does not allow this one deficit to consume her or represent the totality of her self.

Emily states that her parents knew very little about her experience in graduate school and were unable to fully understand what she was studying or the emotional stressors of higher education. She states that she wishes they had asked her questions and had taken more of an active interest in her schooling, but then states that it wasn't that her parents were not interested, but that they felt uncomfortable engaging the topic due to its

unfamiliarity. At one point in the interview Emily stated that she feels some slight resentment from her mother when she knows something that her mother doesn't. She acknowledges the pain of her defection that her mother feels, but again puts this into context.

Generally, Emily describes her parents as supportive of her educational pursuits and very proud of her accomplishments. She does, however, acknowledge that the support given to her was given within the repertoire of her family's knowledge base and often did not fully meet her needs. This is the participant who described the ways in which her mother would give her money, or bring her groceries and baked goods as a show of support. Emily was able to see her parent's efforts as genuine gestures of support despite their apparent lack of potency at times.

Overall, Emily sees the limitations of her family and does not interpret them as weaknesses, but as differences that can be contextualized. It is as though maintaining a stance that both social classes have positive attributes allows her to feel less conflicted about her social mobility and facilitates an easier mobility shift. She appears to successfully straddle the working class-middle class divide and maintain a loyalty to both aspects of her social class identity without trying to be someone she is not. With this, she is able to state that there are few if any class differences felt between herself and her family.

Implications for Clinical Practice

Coping with social injustice, whether it be racism, sexism or classism, results in feelings of powerlessness and invisibility. The results of this study indicate a need for clinicians to educate themselves on the psychological and social effects of class bias and the structure of the various social class cultures. Participants were clear in their acknowledgement that most of their feelings of guilt, inadequacy, loss, shame and anger went unnoticed by those around them. The socially mobile intellectual could benefit from the exploration of both identities with careful attention paid to any denigration or idealization. The exploration of family dynamics is crucial to discovering how class culture and power dynamics have been internalized. Clinicians are advised to listen for evidence of identification with the aggressor, which in this case would be the dominant middle class. The individuals may experience the crisis of competence, questioning of legitimacy, a lack of agency and entitlement, which may serve to undermine their educational and professional success.

In terms of class culture, close family ties and family relationships are typically very important for the working class. The relationship strain resulting from succeeding higher education and social mobility can be devastating for the adult child and his or her family. Clinicians will need to assist this population with the management of their dual identities particularly when interacting within the family as well. As a final note, though this was not a focus in this study, complications from the social mobility journey may threaten to continue into the socially mobile intellectual's life as they begin their own families and are faced with the dichotomy of parenting styles from the middle and the working class. With this new developmental milestone, the disintegration of identity and resulting intrapsychic struggle may be awakened as class culture loyalties are played out

in the choices the individual makes in choosing a mate and as well as in parenting their own child.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The absence of a large, representative sample, and quantifiable data, may limit the conclusiveness of the results obtained in this study. The qualitative, grounded theory design instead allows one to capture the richness and subtlety of the participants' experiences after which the data is then used to develop theory. Studies of this nature utilizing larger numbers will be able to generate more generalizable results and provide a survey of information. It is understood that the racially and ethnically heterogeneous population used in this research will also prevent clear data to emerge on the basis of culture and race, because this research design was intended to focus on the variable of class and not race. Future studies in this area may want to address specifically how race and culture impact the subjective experience of social class mobility. The study could have benefited from knowledge regarding the nature of the participants' relationships to their parents and other family members prior to their college education. Information of this nature would have elucidated and differentiated the true changes in the nature of the familial relationship brought about by social mobility via education. Also it is understood that the reactions by family members to social mobility via education are based on perceived notions obtained second hand from the participants. Future studies may benefit from direct interviews with the socially mobile individual, their parents and their siblings in order to ascertain more comprehensive data as to the nature of the feelings of all involved in this process.

Through the process of analyzing the data it became apparent that the research design proved to be both problematic and beneficial at the same time. The design was problematic in that it failed to reach the depth and detail expected. In particular, the questions related to social class mobility could have been formulated to be more direct. However, the design was beneficial in that it surveyed such a broad range of questions about the participant's childhood, process of becoming an educated person and their experience growing up in a working class household that yielded a great deal of information.

Future studies may benefit from more written questionnaires that ask the participants to provide more specific information in addition to a more thorough verbal interview. Though there appeared to be no indication in the analysis of the results, the variability of both a phone and a face-to-face interview could have compromised the candor with which the participants engaged the interview. The phone interview also eliminated the interviewer's access to facial affect cues that may have suggested more detailed follow-up to particular questions, although on the other hand, it may be that for some interviewees, the phone interview provided a degree of anonymity that increased their willingness to disclose personal material. Future studies should probably utilize only face-to-face interviews. Due to the wide range of information gathered from these interviews future studies may elect to focus on a few aspects of the social mobility journey and explore them in depth. The participants for this study were limited to those who lived in the New York Metropolitan area and areas in Illinois. A study that includes a more national subject representation would provide a more comprehensive view of how these issues are dealt with. Finally, this research sample represented people from working

class backgrounds. Future studies may want to survey those whose family backgrounds would be categorized as poor or working poor, to see what the particular issues are for socially and educationally mobile persons of these backgrounds.

Conclusion

For many participants, the social mobility struggle is punctuated by the sadness, anger, shame, guilt and frustration stemming from alienation and feelings of being at a disadvantage. Working class intellectuals begin their lives having less than their middle and upper class counterparts. These deficits do not only manifest themselves in financial and material resources but in substandard education, gaps in knowledge, cultural inexperience and an unequal access to information. Feelings of alienation can also be painful and damaging when a socially mobile individual experiences difficulty in acculturating to the new middle class society. The loss of the familiar working class environment also becomes a source of stress in this situation. For many, a painful conflict emerges between wanting to enter and become a part of this new world of the middle class intellectual and what it means to leave the old world or parts of it behind. Nevertheless, membership in the middle class is still not automatic and is fraught with anxiety often based around fear of having one's working class past discovered and denigrated. No matter how far the participants went in their careers they still couldn't tell charming stories to colleagues about family vacations in Europe as a child, and they still couldn't go back home without facing the indelible markers of class. They were essentially unable to escape their working class identity. Concurrent membership in both classes appears to be difficult to attain, particularly because membership in one often constitutes a rejection of the other. However, with family support and an ability to utilize

the flexibility of straddling, some participants were able to find a comfortable place within and between their two class cultures. Despite the difficulties inherent in the social mobility process, participants in this study demonstrated remarkable willpower, perseverance and drive. They possess a keen sense of awareness of themselves as well as their current and past social environments. Each person showed great resilience and most importantly great pride in themselves and an appreciation for the privileges generated by their hard work and success.

Table 1

ID#	Age	Gender	Race	Degree Field	Graduation Year	Mother's Education	Father's Education
001	39	F	Caucasian	Sociomedical Sciences	2000	High school graduate	High school graduate
002	38	F	African American	Psychology	2001	High school graduate	High school graduate
003	29	F	Caucasian	Educational Psychology	2001	High school graduate	High school graduate
004	52	M	Caucasian	Criminal Justice	2001	High school graduate	High school graduate
005	31	M	Caucasian	Experimental Psychology	2001	8th Grade	8th Grade
006	37	F	Latino	Psychology	2000	3rd Grade	High school graduate
007	*	M	Caucasian	Civil Engineering	2001	High school graduate	8th Grade
008	31	M	Asian	Chemistry	2001	High school graduate	High school graduate
009	50	F	Caucasian	Hearing Science	2001	High school graduate	High school graduate
011	33	F	Caucasian	Communications	2002	High school graduate	11th Grade
013	45	F	Caucasian	Business Accounting	2001	High school graduate, 2 years secretarial school	GED Diploma
014	41	F	African American	Educational Psychology	2000	High school graduate	High school graduate
015	*	F	Caucasian	Social Work	2000	High school graduate	High school graduate

*Participant refused to provide information.

Table 2

SELECTIVE	**Axial**	*Open*
EXPERIENCE OF LIFE WITH LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES	**Social Class as Burden**	*Felt Disadvantaged* *Shame*
	Social Class as Place of Belonging	*Comfortable With Class Level* *Strong Work Ethic*
FAMILY'S VIEW OF EDUCATION GROWING UP	**Education is Valued**	*Expectations of Academic Pursuits* *Support Provided for Academic Pursuits* *Higher Education Encouraged* *Self Directed Learners*
	Academia as Unfamiliar Environment	*Parents Unable to Assist in Preparing for Post-Secondary Education*
GRADUATE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE AND EFFECT ON THE SELF	**Felt at a Disadvantage**	*Low Level of Parental Education as Deficit and Disadvantage* *Intellectual, Social & Interpersonal Deficits* *No Awareness of Resources*
	Positive Effects on Self Image	*Working Class Upbringing as Asset* *Legitimized by the Ph.D. Degree* *Success as Collective* *Increased Confidence*
EFFECT OF GRADUATE EDUCATION ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	**Distance in Family Relationships**	*Alienation-Disconnection of Experience* *Self-Censorship and Silence* *Education Upsets Hierarchical Balance in Family* *Family Pokes Fun at Education* *Pressure of Knowing*
	Acceptance of Education	*Support* *Pride*
SOCIAL MOBILITY EXPERIENCE AND EFFECT ON THE SELF	**Disintegration of New Identity**	*Alienation-Conflicting Differences* *Secrets-Distance* *Questioning Legitimacy*
	Moving Toward Integration of New Identity	*Straddling* *Appreciation of Working Class Roots* *Positive Feelings-Self Enrichment*
EFFECT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	**Inability to Integrate Middle Class Identity**	*Success as Rejection of Family of Origin* *Conflicting Differences*
	Class Differences Tolerated By Family	*Family Integrates Social Class Differences* *No Class Differences Felt*

Appendix A

Tiffany C. Miller, M.A.
Clinical Psychology Graduate Student
City University of New York
The Graduate School and University Center
City College Campus
Phone: (212) 928-5861
Fax: (212) 543-2924
Cellular (347) 693-9683
E-Mail tiff181@earthlink.net

{Date}

My name is Tiffany Miller and I am currently a Doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. I am working on my dissertation and am at the point where I need to begin interviewing subjects. The topic of my dissertation is the subjective experience of social class mobility. For the purposes of this study I need to interview Ph.D. graduates. I am writing this letter to ask if I would be able to have access to the names and addresses of people who have graduated from your university within the last three years in order to send out the enclosed recruitment letter.

I would like to send out a mass mailing to Ph.D. graduates to see if any fit my inclusion criteria and would consent to participate in my study. If your policy is not to give out any addresses of your alumni, I could provide stamped letters sealed in envelopes that would only need to be addressed by your office and mailed out.

I thank you for taking the time to read through this request and hope that you will contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Tiffany C. Miller, M.A.

Appendix B

Tiffany C. Miller, M.A.
Clinical Psychology Graduate Student
City University of New York
The Graduate School and University Center
City College Campus
Phone (347) 693-9683
E-Mail tiff181@earthlink.net

{Date}

Dear Recent Graduate:

My name is Tiffany Miller and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Clinical Psychology Program at the CUNY Graduate Center. I am looking for recent Doctoral graduates who would be willing to participate in my dissertation research. The study will focus particularly on the impact of social class mobility on personal identity and family relationships. I am looking for people to interview who meet the following criteria:

- Subjects must be identified as having grown up in a lower income or working class household
- Parents of each subject can not be college educated
- Subjects must have completed their Ph.D. degree
- Subjects must have graduated with their Ph.D. degree no more than three years ago
- Subjects must be employed in their field of study

Your participation would be voluntary and anonymous, and would require a 1 to 2 hour phone interview to answer a series of questions regarding the process of coming from a struggling working class or lower income family, entering the world of academia, then graduating and becoming successful in your field of study.

If you meet the subject selection criteria and would be willing to tell your story to help me in my research please contact me via phone or e-mail. Also, if you happen to know anyone who meets the above criteria I would appreciate it if you would please forward this information to them.

Congratulations on your achievements, and good luck to you in your future.

Sincerely,

Tiffany C. Miller, M.A.

Appendix C

Phone Screening questionnaire

I am going to ask you a few preliminary screening questions.

How would you describe your family's financial status growing up?
What is the highest level of education completed by your mother?
What is the highest level of education completed by your father?
What is the highest educational degree that you have completed?
In what field of study?
In what year did you officially graduate from your program?
Are you currently working?
If yes, describe your current employment.
Is this work considered to be within your field of study?

Appendix D

Consent Form for The Effects of Social Class Mobility on Sense of Self and Family Relationships in Doctoral Graduates from Lower Class Backgrounds

My name is Tiffany Miller and I am a student in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program at The City College of The City University of New York, and the Principal Investigator of this study.

Statement of Research: You are being asked to participate in a study about social class and social mobility. This study will explore the ways in which individuals experience social mobility gained through higher education.

Study Procedures: If you choose to participate you will be asked to answer some questions about yourself and others in your life in an interview that will last approximately 1 hour. With your consent the entire interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim. Neither you nor anyone you mention will be named or identified in this study. All the documents used in this study including the audiotapes and transcriptions will be assigned a participant identification number, instead of your name, to maintain your confidentiality. The audiotapes and transcriptions will be locked in the investigator's home office where no one, other than the investigator, will have access to the information. All data will be kept for at least three years following the completion of the study. If you so desire, you have the right to review the audiotapes and transcripts or have them destroyed at any time.

Potential Risks: You may find some of the questions in the interview uncomfortable or difficult to answer.

Potential Benefits: If you participate in this study you may get some benefit from the experience in that you may learn more about yourself and your relationships. While you may find the interview interesting and learn something about yourself from it, please understand that the purpose of this research is not for your immediate benefit. Your participation in this study may benefit society's understanding of social class and its relationship to social mobility.

Your Rights as a Research Volunteer: Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time. You may also choose to skip questions you feel uncomfortable answering at any time. You have the right to ask any questions about the nature of this study and your participation in this study and you have the right to have those questions answered to your satisfaction by the investigator.

Possible Study Publications: The investigator may publish the results of this study, but names of people or any identifying information or characteristics will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide the investigator with your address and she will send you a copy in the future.

Availability of Investigator: If at any time you have further questions about the study you may contact Tiffany Miller (347-693-9683, tiff181@earthlink.net) or Dr. Peter Fraenkel (212-650-5671, p.fraenkel@verizon.net) at the City University of New York. If you have any questions or complaints about your rights as a participant, you may contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, (212-817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu).

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form.

I agree to have this interview audiotaped [please check one]: ☐ Yes ☐ No

_____ _____ _____ _____

Participant's Signature Date Investigator's Signature Date

Appendix E

Interview questionnaire

1. Age:_____

2. Please describe your ethnic origins.

   _____

3. What did your mother do for a living when you were growing up? (Please list all jobs or occupations that you know of.)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What did your father do for a living when you were growing up? (Please list all jobs or occupations that you know of.)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Please check **ALL** of the words or phrases that applied to **<u>your family</u>** when you were growing up.

☐ Poor	☐ Well-off
☐ Working Class	☐ Middle Class
☐ Disadvantaged	☐ Relatively Advantaged
☐ Less Privileged	☐ More Privileged
☐ Low Income	☐ High Income
☐ Low Status	☐ High Status
☐ Low Class	☐ Upper Class

6. Please check **ALL** of the words or phrases that apply to **<u>you</u>** now.

☐ Poor	☐ Well-off
☐ Working Class	☐ Middle Class
☐ Disadvantaged	☐ Relatively Advantaged
☐ Less Privileged	☐ More Privileged
☐ Low Income	☐ High Income
☐ Low Status	☐ High Status
☐ Low Class	☐ Upper Class

Appendix F

The Effects of Social Class Mobility on Sense of Self and Family Relationships In Doctoral Graduates from Working Class Backgrounds

As you know I am interviewing recent doctoral graduates who have come from low-income backgrounds. People have very different experiences and I am interested in learning about your educational experience, particularly the impact it has had on your sense of self and your relationships with close family members. I will begin by asking some general questions about yourself and your family and then I will get into more specific details.

1) When you think about your childhood, what comes to mind?
   A) Probe for positive and negative experiences

2) When you think of the word, class, what comes to mind?
- Probe: How do you define class?
- What distinguished one class from another?
- Where did you develop your understanding and definition of class? (Probe for family, education, general knowledge).

3) How would you describe your family's class level growing up?
   A) If there were any changes as you grew older please elaborate.

4) Looking back now, what was your family's financial situation while you were growing up. Specifically what sort of things were you not able to afford and were you able to afford.
   A) Probe: Things that were lacking? Difficult times? Better times?
   B) Probe for different times in their lives, early childhood, adolescence, early adulthood.
   C) Probe: What is your parents' current financial status?

5) As a kid growing up what did you sense or know about your family's financial and material resources?
   A. Probe: How did you know money was tight? Tell me about a time when it became clear that resources were limited.

6) There are many different feelings one can experience from growing up in a household with limited financial resources. How did your family's financial status effect you?

7) How did your family think about or view the upper class?
A) Middle class?
B) Lower class?

8) People have very different experiences in terms of how education is addressed in their families. What is your recollection of how different members of your family felt about education in general and about your education in particular as you were growing up.
A) Probe: Mom, Dad, siblings, extended family members, friends, mentors.

9) Thinking back to when you were deciding to attend an undergraduate college, tell me about the process of coming to this decision.
A) Probe: Did your family have any role to play in that decision?
B) Probe: What reaction did your family have to your decision to enroll in college?
C) Probe for nuclear family, extended family, significant others.
D) Probe: Who helped you with the process?
E) Probe: Who was less supportive or created impediments?

10) Tell me, how is it that you ended up in a Ph.D. program? Describe how you came to that decision?
A) Probe: Did your family have any role to play in that decision?
B) Probe: What reactions did your family have to your decision to enroll in graduate school?
C) Probe for nuclear family, extended family, significant others.

11) In what ways did your family's response to your decision to enter a Ph.D. program meet and/or not meet your expectation about how they would react?
A) Probe for each important family member.
B) If the response did not meet expectations: How did you wish they would have responded?

12) Knowing that any graduate education is stressful, at times, where did you find emotional support while in graduate school?
A) Probe for family, friends, mentors, professors.
B) At the time what were the most important qualities of this person that you felt were most helpful?
C) If they didn't mention parents: I noticed that you didn't mention your mother and/or your father (or whomever the interviewee earlier described to be in these roles for him/her) as a source of emotional support in graduate school. Tell me why they weren't mentioned.

13) Tell me about any people in your life who have been unsupportive of your education, or people you feel criticized or ridiculed you for your level of education.
   A) Probe: Who were these people?
   B) Probe: Tell me about a time when they demonstrated their lack of support or criticized or ridiculed you? How did you respond?
   C) Note: If they have answered one (unsupportive or criticized/ridiculed) and not the other, probe for the other.

14) Graduate school is a tremendous journey that can have different effects on different people. Tell me about how your experience in higher education had an impact on how you view or describe yourself? On your ways of relating to others particularly family members? On your lifestyle?
   A) Has anyone noticed these changes in you? Tell me about a time when they did.
   B) What have their reactions been?
   C) Probe for nuclear and extended family, friends, partners, mentors, professors.
   D) What were the key experiences that resulted in these particular impacts on your self?

15) Thinking back to the time when you were still taking graduate courses, what comes to mind when you think about being in graduate classes as a person from a lower social/economic class.
   A) What differences did you notice between yourself and classmates who were from higher economic classes than yourself?
   B) How did these differences show themselves? Tell me about how you felt and how you reacted?
   C) How did you know these classmates were from a different class? What were the signs?

16) Can you talk about the ways in which your feel your family did and did not prepare you to achieve in a tough academic environment?
   A) Probe: What skills or abilities did you feel you had?
   B) Probe: What skills or abilities do you feel you lacked?

17) I want to ask you a question now about your current professional career. Tell me about the ways in which your professional position has had an impact on your personality. Interests. Ways of relating to others particularly family members. Lifestyle.
   A) Has your family noticed? Who?
   B) Probe for a narrative: Tell me about their reactions?
   C) What effect have these reactions had on you?

18) What social class would you say you fit into now? Why?

19) Describe what it has been like to come from a financially disadvantaged background to where you are today? What has that journey been like for you?

20) Some people have a sense that the values held by their family of origin at times may differ from the values of the class they are currently in. Tell me about the ways in which your values have changed from the time when you were living with your parents and now?

21) As a person who originally came from a lower economic background, how do you believe others perceive you now that you have attained your degree?
   A) Probe for a narrative: What are your reactions and thoughts about these perceptions?

22) Tell me what it has been like for you to be at a higher educational level than your parents?
   A) Probe: Some people report that they have felt ostracized, forced to suppress their knowledge, guilty, superior. Have you experienced any of these feelings, and can you describe what it has been like for you?
   B) Probe: Are you praised or denigrated by your family, or are you seen as and treated like the same person you were before you began graduate school?
   C) Please give me an example of when this happened/you felt that way?
   D) Was your family aware of your feelings?
   E) How do you think these experiences impacted upon your relationship with your family members?
   F) What impact do these reactions have on you and how you feel about yourself?

23) I am going to ask you to think about recent family gatherings. When you think about the time spent with your family what comes to mind with respect to class or educational differences between you and them?

24) Thinking about some of the internal struggles, relationship conflicts, and financial, educational or other challenges you experienced due to the topics we've been discussing, in what ways have these had a positive impact on you?
   A) Probe: personal growth, strengthening of certain relationships, increased self-determination and self-definition, new emotional strengths, clear commitment to career

25) How has it been for you to talk about these issues of education and class in this interview?

REFERENCES

Altman, N. (1995). On bringing social class into the psychoanalytic domain. *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, 12* (2), 115-124.

Baker, H.S. (1989). If Rocky goes to college: Dilemmas of working class college students. *Adolescent Psychiatry, 16*, 70-91.

Billson, J. M. & Terry, M. B. (1982). In search of the silken purse: Factors in attrition among first-generation college students. *College and University, 58* (1), 57-75.

Bourdieu, P. (1983). Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital [Economic capital, cultural capital, social capital]. In R. Kreckel (Ed.), *Soziale Ungleichheitan (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2)* (pp.183-198). Goettingen: Otto Schartz & Co. English translation by Richard Nice. Retrieved November 16, 2005, from http://www.viet-studies.org/Bourdieu_capital.html.

Bychowski, G. (1970). Psychoanalytic reflections on the psychiatry of the poor. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 51*, 503-509.

Carter, E. A. & McGoldrick, M. (1980). *The family life cycle: A framework for family therapy*. New York: Gardner Press.

Cohler, B. J. (1991). The life story and the study of resilience and response to adversity. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1* (2-3), 169-200.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Towards a psychology of Black liberation. *Black World, 20*, 13-27

Dews, C. L. B. & Law, C. L. (1995). *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Dews, C. L. B. (1995). Afterward. In C. L. B. Dews & C. L. Law (Eds.). *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class* (pp. 1-12). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Egan, T. (2005, May 24). No degree, and no way back to the middle. *New York Times*. Retrieved May 26, 2005, from http://www.nytimes.com

Erikson, E. H. (1959/1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: Norton.

Freitas, A.L. & Downey, D. (1998). Resilience: A dynamic perspective. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 22* (2), 263-285.

Freud, S. (1955). Lines of advance in psycho-analytic therapy. In J. Strachey (Ed.). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 17, pp159-168). London: Hogarth Press. (Original work published in 1918).

Gallaher, G. L. (1984). A descriptive study of factors associated with social class mobility for Black adolescent females. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 45* (6-A), pp. 1641.

Garza-Guerrero, A. C. (1974). Culture shock: Its mourning and the vicissitudes of identity. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 22* (2), 408-429

Gorman, T. J. (1998). Social class and parental attitudes toward education. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 27* (1), 10-35.

Granfield, R. (1991). Making it by faking it. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 20* (3), 331-351.

Greenwald, R. A. & Grant, E. A. (1999). Border crossings: Working-class encounters in higher education. In S. L. Linkon (Ed.). *Teaching working class*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Hawley, D. R. & DeHaan, L. (1996). Toward a definition of family resilience: Integrating life-span and family perspectives. *Family Process, 35* (3) 283-296.

Jackson, B. (1975). Black identity development. *Journal of Education Diversity, 2,* 19-25.

Jackson, D. D. (1957). The question of family homeostasis. *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement, 31*, 79-90.

Javier, R. A. (1996). Psychodynamic treatment with the urban poor. In R. M. Perez Foster, M. Moskowitz & R. A. Javier (Eds.). *Reaching across boundaries of culture and class: Widening the scope of psychotherapy* (pp. 93-113). Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.

Jensen, B. (2004). Across the great divide: Crossing classes and clashing cultures. In M. Zweig (Ed.). *What's class got to do with it? American society in the twenty-first century* (pp. 168-183). Ithaca, New York: ILR Press

Johnson, A. M., & Szurek, S. A. (1952). The genesis of antisocial acting out in children and adults. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 21*, 323-343.

Langston, D. (1995). Tired of playing monopoly? In M. L. Andersen & P. H Collins (Eds.). *Race Class and Gender: An Anthology -Second Edition* (pp.101-110). Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Law, C. L. (1995). Introduction. In C. L. B. Dews & C. L. Law (Eds.). *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class* (pp. 1-12). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lopez, F. G. (1989). Current family dynamics, trait anxiety, and academic adjustment: Test of family-based model of vocational identity. *Journal of Vocational*

Behavior, 35, 76-87.

Moskowitz, M. (1996). The social conscience of psychoanalysis. In R. M. Perez Foster, M. Moskowitz, & R.A. Javier (Eds.). *Reaching across boundaries of culture and class: Widening the scope of psychotherapy* (pp. 21-46). Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.

Pals, J. L. (1999). Identity consolidation in early adulthood: Relations with ego-resiliency, the context of marriage, and personality change. *Journal of Personality, 67* (2), 295-307.

Piorkowski, G. K. (1983). Survivor guilt in the university setting. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 61* (10), 620-622.

Proctor, B. D. & Dalaker, J. (2002). *Poverty in the United States, 2001*. Washington, DC: Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002. Retrieved December 13, 2003, from http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p60-219.pdf.

Raskin, P. M. (2002). Identity in adulthood: Reflections on recent theory and research. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 2* (1), 101-108.

Reissman, F. (1962). *The culturally deprived child*. New York: Harper.

Roberts, J. S. & Rosenwald, G. C. (2001). Ever upward and no turning back: Social mobility and identity formation among first generation college students. In D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson, & A. Lieblich (Eds.). *Turns in the road: Narrative studies of lives in transition* (pp. 91-119). American Psychological Association, New York, NY.

Ross, J. (1995). Social class tensions within families. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 23* (4), 338-350.

Rossides, D. W. (1997). *Social stratification: The interplay of class, race and*

gender- Second Edition. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Scott, J & Leonhardt, D. (2005, May 15). Shadowy lines that still divide. *New York Times*. Retrieved May 23, 2005, from http://www.nytimes.com.

Sennett, R. & Cobb, J. (1973). *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Snarey, J. R. & Vaillant, G. E. (1985). How lower and working class youth become middle class adults: The association between ego defense mechanisms and social mobility. *Child Development, 56* (4), 899-910.

Sorokin, P. A. (1959). *Social and cultural mobility.* London: Free Press

Steinglass, P. (1987). A systems view of family interaction and psychopathology. In T. Jacobs (Ed.). *Family interaction and psychopathology: Theories, methods and findings* (pp. 25-65). New York: Plenum Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Sue, D. W. & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Terestman, N., Miller, J. D. & Weber, J. J. (1974). Blue -collar patients at a psychoanalytic clinic. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 131* (3), 261-266.

Tokarczyk, M. M. (2004). Promises to keep: Working class students in higher education. In M. Zweig (Ed.). *What's class got to do with it? American society in the twenty-first century* (pp.161-167). New York: Cornell University Press.

Veroff, J. B. & Goldberger, N. R. (1995). What's in a Name? The case for "Intercultural" psychology. In N. R. Goldberger & J. B. Veroff (Eds.) *The culture and*

psychology reader (pp. 3-21). New York: New York University Press.

Wachtel, P. L. (2002). Psychoanalysis and the disenfranchised: From therapy to justice. *Psychoanalytic psychology, 19* (1), 199-215.

Waldhorn, H. (1960). Assessment of analyzability: technical and theoretical observations. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 29*, 478-506.

Werner, E.E. (1993). Risk, resilience, and recovery: Perspectives from the kauai longitudinal study. *Development and Psychopathology, 5,* 503-515.

Wright, E.O. (2000). *Class counts*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Xiao, H. (2000). Class, gender, and parental values in the 1990's. *Gender & Society, 14* (6), 785-803.