TRANSITION TO THE ACADEMY: THE INFLUENCE

OF WORKING-CLASS CULTURE FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

LaDonna L. Bridges

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2017

Leadership in Higher Education

ProQuest Number: 10267430

ProQuest 10267430

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LADONNA L. BRIDGES

Approved as to style and content by:

_____

Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Professor
Chairperson of Committee

_____

Katalin Szelényi, Associate Professor
Member

_____

Jarrett Gupton, Assistant Professor
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Member

_____

Dr. Jay Dee, Program Director
Leadership in Higher Education Program

_____

Dr. Tara Parker, Chairperson
Department of Leadership in Education

ABSTRACT

TRANSITION TO THE ACADEMY: THE INFLUENCE

OF WORKING-CLASS CULTURE FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

May 2017

LaDonna L. Bridges, B.S.J., Northwestern University
M.Ed., Springfield College
Ph.D., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Professor Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Ph.D.

This dissertation addresses the influence of working class culture on transition to college

for first-generation, low-income students. Transition to the dominant culture of college

often leaves first-generation students living in two worlds, creating cultural dissonance

and leading to lower retention and persistence. Through narrative inquiry, this study

explores the lived experiences of students of color, including recent immigrants, at both

private and public universities during the first semester of college. Focusing specifically

on how habitus and social class shape academic and social experiences for this

population, this qualitative study employs virtual go-alongs or walking interviews as a

methodology to supplement formal interviews. Using common geospatial technologies,

virtual go-alongs are a modification of the go-along ethnographic research tool and allow for greater exploration of habitus and transition to college. This inquiry advances an understanding of the heterogeneity of this student population and provides insight into how a working class background shapes expectations, attitudes and aspirations for college, first-generation identity, and cultural transition; the imperative to interrogate further the intersectionality of race, ethnicity and social class emerged as an outcome of this study. Recommendations for practice include using the virtual go-along as a tool for advisors, faculty and other higher education professionals to advance knowledge of first-generation students from working class backgrounds.

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful and brilliant daughters,
Caitlin Elizabeth and Taylor Christine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

a gift, plain and simple. Your insight and perspective always take me to a different place, generally one of peace and contemplation. Your laugh is among my most favorite things ever, and your generosity of spirit is boundless. How blessed I am that all "the lovelies" are now my family, and I am theirs.

To my "Framily," I could not have done this without your collective amazingness. From the many Fridays when Vikky Angelico and Ally Chisholm carried the load to the endless support from my faculty friends and colleagues too numerous to mention, I always felt as if I had an army behind me. Paul Welch, you are an amazing listener and dear friend; Glenn Cochran, watching you move from practitioner to scholar practitioner inspired me, and the phone calls when panic set in surely saved me; Mark Nicholas, your brilliance and encouragement during our writing dates kept me knowing I could "do better;" and Melinda Stoops, you gave me the space to not only be a doctoral student but also to apply my scholarship to our daily work. Fear of disappointing any of you kept me going. To all the wonderful staff at CASA, you inspire me to be a better leader, a better scholar and a better practitioner, and I thank you for that.

To the faculty in the Higher Education Leadership program, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be transformed through learning. Your dedication to the growth and development of each student is remarkable, and I am fortunate to have been in your spheres. You challenged me not only to become a scholar but also to become a leader of social justice in higher education. My worldview and my practice have been forever altered for the better.

To my dissertation committee, Dr. Dwight E. Giles, Dr. Katalin Szelenyi, and Dr. Jarrett Gupton, thank you is inadequate. Dr. Gupton, from the moment I read your dissertation in a qualitative research methods class and we spoke with you via Skype, I aspired to tell a story that moved others the way your work moved me. I credit you with leading me to discover a methodology capable of generating a sense of place for my participants. I recall during my proposal hearing when you suggested I find a way to "see" what my participants saw as they navigated between home and college. Little did I know that this seemingly small recommendation would lead me to the power of virtual go-alongs. Undoubtedly it is one of the most significant ah-ha moments in my dissertation process.

Dr. Szelenyi, you inspire me. It is no secret that I suffer from the "imposter syndrome" prevalent among those who are first in their family to attend college. I will not forget the day you told me I was a good writer and storyteller, and you followed the remark with a pause and "Really" because you knew I didn't believe it. You always made learning a collaborative experience; you were not above letting us know when you had learned something from us. Your intelligent, gentle guidance coupled with your compassion are a rare commodity, and I am thankful to be the beneficiary of both.

Dr. Giles, anything I write will fall short of communicating all that you mean to me. When I was without an advisor at a critical time, you agreed to "take me on," and then

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INTRODUCTION

First-generation college students face multiple barriers on the road to degree

attainment in higher education. Much of the existing research on the challenges first-

generation students face has considered this population from a deficit framework,

examining what students lack in terms of academic preparedness or parental knowledge

of college. Few studies have addressed specifically the role social class plays in the

transition to higher education for first-generation students from working-class

backgrounds. As college is widely considered to be the path to a better life or upward

mobility, it is important to understand how a working-class background shapes the

academic and social experiences of first-generation students during the college transition

process.

My Story

I am a first-generation, low-income college student, an identity I held long before

this subpopulation became a focus in higher education research. It was not until the first

few weeks of my doctoral studies that I began to fully make sense of my own experience

and to articulate for the first time the impact of this identity on my personal and

professional life. The term "straddler" was introduced while reading Lubrano's *Limbo:*

Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams (2004), and the pieces of my own story began to tumble together as a cohesive narrative.

I grew up in a small Missouri town in the Ozarks, closer to the Arkansas border than to any city. I was the third of four children and the first to attend college. My father was an auto mechanic, who claimed to have a high school diploma although there was never evidence of such; my mother had a high school diploma but never worked outside the home, providing in-home childcare instead to local families. Neither my maternal nor paternal grandparents had high school diplomas, although my maternal grandparents owned and operated a country market, gas station and garage for many years, living comfortably enough to buy a new Cadillac every decade and take my brothers and me on vacations around the country.

I was a high-achieving student throughout my elementary and secondary education. By my senior year of high school, I held positions of editor of the yearbook and editor of the school newspaper, and I participated in speech and debate, winning championships in extemporaneous speaking throughout Missouri. I finished in the top 3 percent of my class of nearly 200, and although I worked hard, it seemed academic success came easily to me. After attending both the Democratic and Republican presidential nominating conventions as a junior reporter, I decided journalism was my life's calling. With little help from my high school guidance counselor (or anyone else), I used a book to find the country's top three schools for journalism – Columbia University, Northwestern University, and University of Missouri. When I learned Columbia University was in New York City, I removed it from my list and applied to the other two

schools. This was the extent of my college selection process. My parents offered no guidance, and I had no one to consult, emulate or model.

I was accepted to both Northwestern and Missouri universities. My grandparents drove me to Northwestern for an interview and tour for prospective students, and I thought I would die if I didn't get to go to this beautiful school on the shores of Lake Michigan. I began Northwestern with high hopes, boundless pride, and immense naivety. Mike Rose in *Lives on the Boundary* (1989) eloquently expresses what soon came to define my Northwestern experience:

> You are finally sitting in the lecture hall you have been preparing to sit in for years. You have been the good student, perhaps even the star – you are to be the engineer, the lawyer, the doctor. Your parents have knocked themselves out for you. And you can't get what some man is saying in an *introductory* course. You're not what you thought you were. The alien voice of the lecturer is telling you that something central to your being is, after all, a wish spun in the night, a ruse, and the mist and vapor of sleep. (p. 174)

I was totally and completely unprepared for Northwestern in every respect – academically, socially or financially. I was a full-ride scholarship kid with a suitcase of homemade clothing. I had never heard of Dean sweaters, Sperry topsiders, Lanz nightgowns, or East Coast boarding schools. I bought my clothes at JC Penney twice a year; my typewriter was the most expensive thing ever bought just for me. I remember my mom and dad driving me to Chicago that first fall. After unpacking the car, we started to say our goodbyes. My dad, never one for many words, said: "I wouldn't trade my 40

acres of farmland for this whole mess up here. But if this is what you've got to do, this is what you've got to do."

And so it began -- the bifurcated and bicultural existence of a country girl in an elite educational institution. I didn't develop into the academic I hoped to become, and I've reflected over and over again about why this was the case. I felt inadequate in the classroom. While speech and debate tournaments had given me confidence in high school, this soon dissipated in the classrooms of Northwestern. Everybody seemed more academically prepared than I. The vocabulary of learning was overwhelming, and I did not know how to admit that nor did I know how to solve it. I seldom visited a professor's office, fearful of being exposed as not worthy of being there; I took courses with renowned scholars and experts in their field of research or practice, never taking advantage of access to such individuals. For example, I took astronomy with a professor who was famous for work with UFOs and a consultant to the classic movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* I was captivated by his lectures, and I was aware of the magnitude of being taught by him, but that's where I left it. I never engaged with my professors or coursework on a deeper level. I shied away from academic clubs or activities, and I skated by with mostly B's, a few A's and a few C's. I completed my "teaching newspaper" requirement by living away for a semester and working in a newsroom. Certainly high school taught me that I could work hard and read and write well, yet I had no context for what to expect of college. All the accomplishments in high school had done little to help me understand the true rigors of classroom learning.

The learning outside the classroom was equally consuming. I began to realize that I was poor, not even middle class. My mom was babysitting children in our home to pay for my educational expenses beyond tuition and board paid through my full-ride scholarship. I had work-study, and I soon realized that labeled you as a student with significant financial need. I began to feel ashamed of my background, and that confounded me. Everyone's parents were educated, or so it seemed, and I couldn't bring myself to tell the girl whose dad was chair of the General Mills' coffee division that my dad was an auto mechanic. I vacillated between missing home and avoiding talking about home, and I became adept at listening to people while not sharing my story. I could be self-effacing about coming from Mayberry RFD, as my friends called my hometown, and I could be funny as the girl who said "pee-in" instead of "pen" for a writing utensil.

Subconsciously I must have determined that fitting in socially was easier than fitting in academically. Perhaps I even hoped that one would lead to the other; if I belonged, everything else would fall into place. I engaged in the ritual of sorority rush, pledging one of the most popular houses on campus. Sorority and fraternity houses at Northwestern are located on campus, nestled among the residence halls in beautiful quads, and the Greek system at the time was large (for a school with a total undergraduate population of 3,000) and very active. In many respects, sororities and fraternities provided an outlet to counterbalance the academic rigor of the school. There were no bars or local haunts in Evanston, a dry town that was home to the Women's Christian Temperance Union and its lasting and memorable slogan, "lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine." I had no predisposition or opinion about sororities and

fraternities; they were housing and social networks to me. I became an officer and leader within that group, and I developed a sense of belonging that I so desperately needed. I enjoyed tailgate parties, Big 10 football games and trips into the city; I never tired of the beauty of the campus and Lake Michigan.

I entered Northwestern with much confidence and even more naivety; I left with little self-assurance and a huge dose of reality. My dreams of becoming a television reporter and anchor were overshadowed by my fear of failure. My bravado was gone, replaced by this feeling that I was an imposter. All those achievements and awards in high school were just luck or the result of being a big fish in a little pond. They certainly didn't mean anything once I left the Ozarks. Instead of validating me as a learner, Northwestern left me questioning my worth and my intelligence; the overachiever label no longer applied to me. Of course I could not articulate this at that time, but I knew something significant had occurred because everything shifted. I began to make safe decisions; I chose public relations instead of journalism. I was afraid of rejection and, more importantly, I was afraid that others would find out I was an imposter. There was a presumption that those who attended Northwestern were smart, destined for achievement. What if it was discovered that I was a marginal student at Northwestern or that I really hadn't belonged there. I was uncomfortable with the expectations of a graduate of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern; I was simultaneously aware of the privilege automatically granted to a graduate of an elite educational institution.

It has taken me years to process my own college experience and to take pride in my working-class background. I am keenly aware of the social class boundary I crossed

through education, yet in many ways I continue to struggle to reconcile my bifurcated existence. As hooks (2000) wrote,

> When I chose to attend a "fancy" college rather than a state school close to home, I was compelled to confront class differences in new and different ways. Like many working-class parents, my folks were often wary of the new ideas I brought into their lives from ideas learned at school or from books. They were afraid these fancy ides like the fancy schools I wanted to attend would ruin me for living in the real world. At the time I did not understand that they were also afraid of me becoming a different person – someone who did not speak their language, hold on to their beliefs and their ways. They were working people. To them a good life was one where you worked hard, created a family, worshiped God, had the occasional good time, and lived day to day. (p. 143)

There are many qualities that my working-class culture of origin has bestowed upon me. I do not shy away from hard work, and a strong work ethic remains one of my greatest assets. I have strong love for family and community, and I appreciate the simplicity of a rural existence. I am more often than not resilient in the face of challenge, and I move easily within different social classes. There is no denying that a college degree changed me but not my foundation, my roots. Ultimately, telling the stories of first-year college students from working-class backgrounds as they experience the transition to college allows me to be the researcher, the observer and the participant.

Background

Enrollment in higher education continues to increase, with 42 percent more first-

time freshmen enrolled from 1994-2008 and another 17 percent increase anticipated by 2019 (Hussar & Bailey, 2009). First-generation college students, commonly defined as those whose parents have no formal education beyond high school, comprise approximately 24 percent of all undergraduate college students. According to Engle and Tinto (2008), 4.5 million first-generation, low-income college students were enrolled in higher education in 2008. Data from the 1995-1996 Beginning Postsecondary Study show that first-generation students comprise 47 percent of all entering college students, with 73 percent of those choosing to attend two-year institutions. At four-year colleges, 34 percent of the entering student population is first-generation (Choy, 2001; Engle, 2007).

Regardless of the increase in participation in higher education, first-generation students earn degrees at a lower rate than continuing-generation students. Although various definitions of first-generation students in the literature make it difficult to report consistent numbers, persistence to degree completion is a major focus in first-generation research. First-generation, low-income (family income below $25,000) students are nearly four times, 26 percent versus 7 percent, more likely to leave college after the first year when compared to those students who are not first-generation and low-income (Engle & Tinto, 2008); within six years, 43 percent of the low-income, first-generation students leave college without a degree, compared to 20 percent of continuing-generation students. At four-year institutions, 29 percent leave without a degree, compared to 13 percent of continuing-generation students. Ishitani (2006) found that students whose parents had no college experience were 8.5 times more likely to leave college than continuing-generation students.

Researchers have considered many issues that contribute to the lack of persistence to degree attainment, including pre-college characteristics as well as in-college experiences for first-generation students. Among pre-college characteristics, Engle (2007) cites lack of academic preparation, lower educational aspirations, less parental encouragement and support to attend college, less knowledge about the college application process, and fewer financial resources as factors that impact decisions to attend and prepare first-generation students for college. Regarding in-college experiences, Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) posit "being a first-generation student confers its greatest liability in adjustment to, and survival in, postsecondary education" (p. 429). Academic and social integration, long considered important for adjustment to college, poses specific difficulties for first-generation students (Bui, 2002; Engle, 2007; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson & Terenzini, 2003; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1996). Baker and Velez (1996) define academic integration as the ability to meet academic demands and participate in formal academic structures of an institution; social integration refers to the way in which students become involved in the formal and informal social systems of a campus, including extracurricular activities and residential housing.

Challenges associated with academic and social integration may be symptomatic of a much larger cultural adaptation barrier for first-generation students hoping to integrate into the campus (Berger, 2000; Engle, 2007; Kuh & Love, 2000; Lehmann, 2007). Billson and Terry (1982) describe the transition to college as more difficult for first-generation students, suggesting that first-generation students "are making a longer

jump from the social status of their parents than are second-generation students" (p. 18).

With a disproportionate share coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Saenz,

Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf & Yeung, 2007), first-generation, low-income students struggle

to reconcile the difference in the culture (norms, beliefs, values, and expectations) of their

working-class heritage with the pervasive middle-class culture on a college campus

(Engle, 2007; Kuh & Love, 2000; Lehmann, 2007; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Lehmann (2007), in a study of social class and first-generation students, noted that

working-class status forces students "into position of cultural outsiders with problems

connecting to their wealthy peers and integrating into university life, which ultimately

leads to crises in competency and fears of academic inadequacy" (p. 91).

The relatively small amount of research on social class and higher education

suggests that first-generation students, many of whom come from working-class

backgrounds, encounter considerable difficulty through the transition experience to the

college culture (Lehmann, 2007). Kuh and Love (2000) describe college culture as the

widely accepted ways of doing things that shape how people think and behave and that

others must adopt the norms and attitudes of. Given the complexity of campus culture, it

is important to consider the many ways in which culture is demonstrated on a college

campus (Museus, 2007). According to Jayakumar and Museus (2012), "the norms,

values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that comprise a campus's culture manifest

symbolically in various institutional missions, traditions, language, physical structures,

artwork, media representations, interactions and other artifacts" (p. 7).

The significant disparity between the working-class culture of first-generation students and the college culture can produce cultural discontinuity and dissonance fraught with uncertainty, risk, and complexity (Lehmann, 2004; Lehmann, 2007). Richardson and Skinner (1992) contend first-generation students found this "exposure to campus as a shock that took them years to overcome" (p. 33). Engle (2007) and Terenzini et al. (1996) suggest the pressures and conflicts of transitioning to the dominant campus culture cause intense feelings of isolation, estrangement, confusion, guilt, and anguish for first-generation students. Researchers have considered the incongruence resulting from a student's cultural norms and the college's cultural norms among students of color (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus, Lam, Huang, Kem & Tan, 2012; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998) and have identified cultural dissonance, or tension, that is inversely related to the likelihood of success. Rendon (1992), in her own narrative as a first-generation minority student, described the debilitating effects of this cultural navigation or transition as intense conflicts and problems "that arise from [living] simultaneously in two vastly different worlds while being fully accepted in neither" (p. 56).

While the above research has considered the transition experience for students of color, similar cultural challenges and related dissonance are relevant to first-generation students, many of whom come from working-class backgrounds. LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) suggest that those living in two cultures can experience a "divided self" (p. 395). Park (1928) and Stonequist (1935) posit that those who live in two cultures are marginal people. The marginal human theory, as it is known, suggests that bridging

two cultures is a complex proposition that leads to "ambiguity, identity confusion, and normlessness" (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p. 395).

Problem Statement

The transition to the dominant culture of a college campus often leaves first-generation students from working-class backgrounds living in two worlds. Early theories regarding college transition advance the premise that successful integration, albeit a desired outcome, can only be realized when students abandon their culture of origin, viewing it as a limitation to be overcome. Tinto (1987, 1993) places culture at the center of integration, suggesting that students must separate from their culture of origin, transition to the dominant culture of campus, and assimilate or establish membership in campus subcultures to succeed (Museus et al., 2012). The dominant culture of college, however, is "built and organized according to taken for granted middle- and upper-class cultural norms, unwritten codes, or 'rules of the game'" (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson & Covarrubias, 2012, p. 1178) that are foreign to working-class culture of origin inherent in many first-generation students.

Much of the existing literature on first-generation college students mirrors Tinto's theory and is grounded in a deficit approach, blaming the student for not having the necessary pre-college characteristics, for lacking cultural and social capital, and for not integrating sufficiently into the dominant campus culture (Engle, 2007; Kuh & Love, 2000; Lehmann, 2007; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Although research exists broadly regarding the academic, social and cultural transition to college (Bui, 2002; Engle, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2003; Terenzini et al., 1996) little has been done to

examine the transition process for first-generation students navigating between a working-class culture of origin and the more privileged middle-class culture of campus. Studies have shown that cultural dissonance is inversely related to the likelihood of success for students of color (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus et al., 2012; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Cultural mismatch, or the tension created when a student's culture of origin and the new culture of college clash (Stephens et al., 2012), also is inversely related to high retention and persistence for first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. The cultural mismatch as a result of social class background is often overlooked by colleges and universities when creating programs and developing tools aimed at student transition (Stephens et al., 2012; Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012).

Significance of the Problem

U.S. higher education boasts one of the greatest participation rates in the world (Engle & Tinto, 2008), and the number of students from historically underrepresented populations, including low-income, first-generation, continues to increase. Despite greater access to higher education, degree attainment for first-generation students continues to lag behind, particularly since the likelihood of attending and graduating from college is strongly correlated with parental education (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz et al., 2007). Calling this a "critical population of students to study" (p. 1), Saenz et al. (2007) cite poorer academic preparation, different motivations for enrolling in college, varying levels of parental support and involvement, different expectations of their college experience, and significant obstacles relative to retention and academic success as reasons why first-generation students face unique challenges in

higher education (McDonough, Korn, & Yamasaki, 1997; Pascarella et al., 2004; Thayer, 2000).

This topic is significant not only because it concerns first-generation students but also because it reframes transition from a problem of pre-college characteristics to a problem of cultural transition. Theories of cultural transition have been applied to various populations associated with underrepresentation and lower persistence rates in higher education, but little research has applied these principles to the unique circumstances of first-generation college students (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Walpole, 2003). Kuh and Love (2000) advocate for a deeper examination into how cultural forces such as families, neighborhoods, ethnic and racial groups, social classes, churches and schools influence decisions to leave higher education. As higher education operates in an environment demanding greater accountability for student completion outcomes, institutions will need to identify ways to facilitate the cultural transition of first-generation students, a population expected to top 10 million by 2018 (Hussar & Bailey, 2009).

Scholars have challenged Tinto's (1987, 1993) theory of retention on many levels, primarily in the context of cultural integration and assimilation by racial and ethnic groups into the dominant culture inherent in most higher education institutions. Such scholarship has provided greater understanding of institutional barriers that preclude full participation by these students, and the research continues to evolve and inform practice for students of color. Understanding the cultural challenges for first-generation students, who come from working-class backgrounds and who may have intersecting identities with students of color, also will add to an understanding of institutional barriers as well as

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inform practice. The absence of social and cultural capital has been associated with the lack of persistence among first-generation students, blaming the individual and reinforcing a deficit-minded approach to explain the lower levels of degree attainment by this student population.

Musoba and Baez (2009) contest the way in which cultural and social capital are depicted in higher education research, positing these concepts are used may be a misrepresentation of Bourdieu's work concerning economic, social and cultural capital and Coleman's work regarding social capital. Conflating these theories into a single reference suggests that cultural and social capital are items to be given to students, and, once given, students will survive and thrive (Musoba and Baez, 2009). This conflation also presumes individual agency by students, or lack thereof, and fails to account for structural barriers associated with social class that are embedded in Bourdieu's theory (Musoba & Baez, 2009). Musoba and Baez (2009) argue:

> The translation of a theory of classes into one of individuals hides more than it tells, and does more than it wants, for it obscures the ways in which class structures get formed and reformed in the United States, as well as how individuals, while not completely determined by such structures, are nevertheless constrained by them. (p. 153)

Considering cultural and social capital as individual deficiencies rather than a result of social class obscures the problem of class structures and struggles (Musoba & Baez, 2009).

An examination of working-class culture as a factor that impacts transition to college has yet to be explored with any depth within U.S. higher education, in part because discourse on social class is not as prevalent as that on income, race or ethnicity. Working-class culture of origin is not synonymous with income; studies that consider the experience of students from low-income backgrounds, while important, are not wholly representative of this cultural problem. According to Stevens, Armstrong and Arum (2008), education has long-been associated with stratification in society. Rather than providing the espoused upward mobility, it acts as a "social sieve" both constraining and facilitating social opportunity along social class lines. Despite the positive correlation between college completion and occupational attainment, the significant differences in college completion among first-generations students reinforces the premise that "attainment itself was greatly, though not entirely, determined by family background" (Stevens et al., 2008, p. 129). Access to college, Stevens et al. (2008) further contend, is not enough: "Acquiring appropriate cultural accouterments requires time and money, both of which are often in short supply among first-generation college students" (p. 133).

Cultural dissonance, or the bifurcated experiences of first-generation students who reside in two vastly different cultures, has increasingly entered into the discourse. Although creating culturally responsive college environments is crucial, Kuh (2002) contends, it is not the structural or organizational properties that lead to premature departure; it is the student's *meaning making* of those systems. Meaning making is defined by three tenets: values, assumptions and beliefs about what to expect from college; the role of being a college student; and the value of a college degree. Those with

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less informed meaning making systems will likely have vague or inaccurate notions of college (Kuh, 2002). Students try to understand this new environment using an interpretive scheme or sense-making system developed through experiences in their cultures of origin. According to Kuh (2002),

> For some students the cultural distance is negligible because college going was stitched into the fabric of their cultures of origin. That is, their cultures of origin effectively prepared them to expect and deal with the institutions' values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations. Other students must travel a great distance, an experience that can be arduous, threatening, and intimidating. (p. 204)

This shifting between the culture of origin and the institution's culture creates stress and is believed to contribute to the decision to depart (Kuh, 2002).

Broadly, the role of culture in transition has entered the lexicon for higher education research among students of color. A greater understanding of the cultural transition for first-generation students from working-class backgrounds also may illuminate ways to decrease cultural dissonance for this group and, thereby, increase persistence to degree attainment. Studies of transition as a non-linear, developmental process that involves renegotiation of roles and relationships (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2011; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010) are scant in the higher education literature. Kralik (2002) and Kralik, Visentin and van Loon (2006) portray the transition process not as one of steps but as a cyclical and recurring process that involves meaning making. Kuh (2002), in advocating for greater attention to cultural transition,

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asked how much institutions should expect students to change their values, attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs. For some students, only minor adjustments allow them to fit into an organization's culture; for others, "the magnitude of adjustment is substantial and threatens to cut them off from their cultures of origin" (Kuh, 2002, p. 209). First-generation students enter college with the knowledge that a degree – regardless of how desired – changes them, makes them different from their families.

This study intends to add new considerations to the body of knowledge surrounding social class in higher education. Specifically, the study explores the ways in which first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience the college transition process. To accomplish this, my research examines the ways in which first-generation students perceive their working-class backgrounds, or cultures of origin; the ways in which these students experience the academic and social environments of college; and the ways in which they begin to navigate two distinct cultures. Drawing from literature on transition and biculturalism, defined as possessing or existing in two cultures, this study investigates the ways in which first-generation students from working-class backgrounds make meaning of the college transition experience in relation to their social class.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ways in which working-class culture shapes the college transition process for low-income, first-generation students at a four-year public and a four-year private institution. For purposes of this research, first-generation is defined as those students whose parents or guardians have a

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high school diploma or less education, and working-class will be characterized by the same parental education level; low-income will be defined as Pell Grant eligible. All definitions are explored in more depth later in this section.

Primary research question:

How do first-generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds experience the cultural transition to college?

Sub-questions:

- In what ways do first-generation students perceive their working-class backgrounds?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience the academic environments of college?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience the social environments of college?

- In what ways do the academic and social college experiences of first-generation students from working-class backgrounds shape their academic and social transition process?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds make meaning of the transition process?

Definition of Key Terms

One of the problems inherent to research on first-generation students is the complexity or even impossibility of identifying a universally accepted definition of who is a first-generation college student (Davis, 2010). Many researchers define first-

generation as a student for whom neither parent has any higher education experience (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005); others define first-generation as students with neither parent earning a bachelor's degree (Davis, 2010; Nunez, 2005; Martinez, Sher, Krull & Wood, 2009). The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88), which is referenced by many researchers conducting quantitative studies on first-generation students, divided students into three categories: those whose parents had a high school diploma or less; those whose parents had some college; and those with at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Davis (2010) advocates for a straightforward definition of first-generation as those students for whom neither parent nor guardian has obtained a bachelor's degree. He further contends the lack of a consistent definition leaves higher education with an incomplete picture of first-generation students, resulting is less advocacy for this group overall. According to Davis (2010),

First-generation student status is not about the number of years a parent attended college or the number of academic units that a parent accumulated. It is about being competent and comfortable navigating the higher-education landscape, about growing up in a home environment that promotes the college and university culture. The latter perspective is what *non*-first generation students have when they begin their postsecondary education. In other words, the *absence* of the non-first-generation student experience is what first-generation student status is all about. (p. 4)

Although first-generation status is reliant on student self-report and, therefore,

unverifiable, Davis (2010) posits that identification of first-generation status is as significant as ethnic-minority status -- also reliant on self-disclosure -- to institutional programming and support initiatives.

Ward et al. (2012), while acknowledging the complexity of defining first-generation, support the more narrow definition of first generation, or those students whose parents or guardians have no education beyond high school. Although this definition may deflate the actual number of students who qualify as first-generation college students, Ward et al. (2012) contend these are the students in most need of specific attention as they enter college. While the trend is to define first-generation narrowly as Ward et al. (2012), my study will adhere to the less strict definition of first-generation as presented by Davis (2010), that neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree.

Despite the complexity of defining first-generation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) along with other higher education scholars have continued to use large data sets to create a profile of first-generation students. Generally, first-generation students are more likely to be female (Chen, 2005; Ishitani, 2003); an ethnic minority (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006; Bui, 2002); from lower-income families (Chen, 2005; Bui, 2002; Housel & Harvey, 2010); and speak a language other than English at home (Bui, 2002). Additionally, much of the research on first-generation college students has been derived from analysis of large datasets and has been focused in one of three areas: comparing the pre-college characteristics of first-generation to continuing-generation college students; understanding the academic and social transition experience

from high school to college; and exploring various other factors related to persistence and graduation rates (Pascarella et al., 2004). Research into the cultural experience of first-generation students also has begun to emerge through qualitative research.

Finally, low-income and first-generation are not interchangeable terms, although they are often used together in studies comparing outcomes to students who are neither first-generation nor low-income (Has-Vaughn, 2004; Davis, 2010). According to Davis (2010), some first-generation students are low-income (below $25,000), some are students of color, and some are White. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), through an analysis of data from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reported that 18 percent of first-generation students had family incomes from the lowest quartile while 2.2 percent of continuing-generation students identified with the lowest income quartile. Although this is a considerable difference, it is important to note that nearly 57 percent of first-generation students reported family income in the two middle quartiles, and 25 percent reported family income in the highest quartile (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). Hahs-Vaughn (2004), acknowledging that first-generation families report less income overall, noted that low-income, first-generation students face different challenges and barriers than do first-generation students who are not low-income (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). Similarly, Gupton, Castelo-Rodriguez, Martinez and Quintanar (2009) report many working poor families have experiences akin to first-generation students although these are not homogenous groups. Throughout this literature review, studies directed specifically at first-generation, low-income will be identified as such; studies limited to the broad category of first-generation students will be thusly noted along with the study's

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definition of first-generation. For purposes of my research, students will be low-income, first-generation. Low-income will be defined by eligibility for a Pell Grant, or by meeting the federal standards for need-based financial aid that does not need to be repaid.

Defining working class and, subsequently, working-class culture is equally complex. Socioeconomic status (SES) and social class are often used interchangeably as ways to distinguish social groupings (APA, 2006). While social class has often been associated with boundaries established from birth, SES is a broader measurement of education, occupation, and income, all of which determine social standing or class (APA, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Coleman, 1983). The distinctions between SES and class are complex and dynamic. Although individuals may achieve different SES over a lifetime, particularly through educational attainment, the relations among social classes remain constant (APA, 2006; Coleman, 1983). Gilbert (2011) contends SES is reliant on prestige of occupation and social standing while social class is a group of equal rank but differentiated from others by characteristics such as occupation, prestige or wealth.

Although education, occupation and income are associated with both SES and class, educational attainment is often used as the most common distinction between social classes, according to Stephens, Markus and Townsend (2007). In the simplest of definitions, working-class individuals do not have a four-year bachelor's degree; middle-class and above do (Stephens et al., 2007). Vander Putten (2001), drawing from literature around social class and higher education, proffered the following description of working-class students:

Both parents possess an education level of high school or less; the student had

low-income status during childhood and through their undergraduate college

years; parent(s) work in blue-collar occupations, e.g. farmer, maid, coal miner,

factory worker, manual laborer; parent(s) and student did not participate fully in a

middle-class lifestyle; the student feels distance from the middle-class lifestyle;

and the student identifies with the concept of the working class. (p. 17)

The task of choosing definitions for this study was complicated as both first-

generation and working-class are defined inconsistently in the literature. For first-

generation, this challenge is due in part to the reliance on self-report; for working-class,

this inconsistency is the lack of broad discussion about social class in this country. The

presidential election of 2016 brought greater attention to how working class is defined,

and this scrutiny led to distinctions between working class and working poor (Williams,

2016). This study did not attempt to recognize the difference between working class and

working poor, although participants would fall into both categories. For purposes of this

study, first-generation will be defined as having parents with no bachelor's degree, and

working class will be defined by income and type of job held by parents.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

First-generation college students comprise a growing number of those entering

higher education, yet these students continue to lag behind second- or continuing-

generation students in their degree attainment. A considerable amount of the existing

research on the experiences and outcomes of first-generation college students explores

the social and cultural transition to higher education from a deficit standpoint and

presumes that a successful transition is a precursor to persistence and degree attainment

(Engle & Tinto, 2008). While much of the extant literature addresses the lack of cultural

and social capital as reasons for this gap in degree completion, recent research has begun

to explore more deeply and specifically the role of social class as a factor in hindering

degree attainment. An overview of class and socioeconomic status in relation to culture

of origin opens the second literature area of this review. The norms, values and beliefs

that embody working-class culture will be explored to provide greater understanding of

this cultural frame and its influence on transition to college for first-generation students.

Similarly, the campus culture and what is privileged within will be examined to identify

factors that may preclude an inclusive and successful transition for first-generation

students. A deeper examination of transition as it relates to home culture in contrast to

campus culture should illuminate the unique challenges faced and cultural dissonance

encountered by first-generation students. This literature review concludes with an examination of the conceptual framework for the proposed study. By aligning elements from three theoretical frames – habitus as presented by Bourdieu, transition as a meaning-making process, and biculturalism as a desired outcome of successful transition – the foundation for this research will be established.

<center>**Experiences and Outcomes for First-Generation Students**</center>

Transition to college presents unique and difficult challenges for first-generation students, and no single theory provides the template through which to view their transition. Much of the recent research on first-generation college students has been focused in one of three areas: comparing the pre-college characteristics of first-generation to other college students; understanding the transition experience from high school to college; and exploring factors related to persistence and graduation rates (Pascarella et al., 2004). Despite these categorizations, much crossover remains within the existing literature on first-generation college students, leaving little research focused exclusively on one of these categories and leaving much room for additional research on the experiences of first-generation students. Additionally, much of the research has analyzed large datasets to glean information; fewer qualitative studies have been undertaken to explore the experiences of first-generation students. Emerging research, however, focuses less on characteristics of first-generation students and more on interventions intended to impact retention and persistence.

Pre-College Characteristics and Comparisons to Others

The findings of existing research identify several characteristics associated with

first-generation college students. They are more likely to be female (Chen, 2005; Ishitani, 2006); to be a member of an ethnic minority (Bui, 2002; Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006); to be from a lower socioeconomic status (Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005); and to speak language other than English at home (Bui, 2002). Thayer (2000) and Chen (2005) found these students were more underprepared for college; more than half, or 55 percent, needed remedial coursework, compared to 27 percent of continuing-generation students (Chen, 2005). Furthermore, Chen (2005) further found that first-generation students scored lower on standardized tests and, overall, fewer (59 percent vs. 29 percent) took standardized admission tests, such as SAT and ACT. In addition to enrolling more frequently in two-year institutions (Chen, 2005), first-generation students who enroll in four-year institutions tend to choose less selective institutions (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Lower aspirations among first-generation students may be responsible for this failure to pursue a post-secondary education. Engle (2007) found that only 53 percent of the first-generation students expected to earn a bachelor's degree compared to 90 percent of the continuing-generation students. Similarly, 91 percent of continuing-generation students planned to enroll in college immediately after high school while only 68 percent of first-generation students planned to go straight to college. According to Engle (2007), even among academically qualified first-generation students, 25 percent fail to enroll in college two years after high school graduation, compared to 5 percent of continuing-generation students who fail to enroll within two years.

Lower aspirations among first-generation students who attend and complete college are often associated with or attributed to differences in family support (London,

1989; Nunez, 2005). Hossler, Schmit and Vesper (1999) distinguished between parental encouragement, or how often parents talked to their children about college, and parental support, or how often parents became involved in the college search and admissions process. First-generation students reported much less encouragement and support – both factors associated with college aspirations (Hossler et al., 1999; Engle, 2007). Vargas (2004) defines encouragement and support as a form of "college knowledge," or "information and advice about college preparation, financial aid, and planning" (p. 3). A recent report reviewing 35 years of data collected through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, offers a slightly different assessment of parental support. Saenz et al. (2007) contend that since 1971, the number of first-generation students who claim parental encouragement as a reason for attending college has more than doubled.

Vargas (2004) notes that a lack of college knowledge is prevalent among minority, low-income and first-generation college students -- populations that need intensive guidance to navigate the higher education process. Continuing-generation college students receive this knowledge from their parents, putting them at a distinct advantage and positively impacting their aspirations for college (Vargas, 2004). Parents who have never gone to college may not understand the benefits of attending college and may be fearful of the associated costs and financial aid, thereby discouraging the process (Engle, 2007; Vargas, 2004). Misinformation about college costs and financial aid is considered one of the most significant barriers to college aspirations for first-generation, low-income and students of color (Engle, 2007; Vargas, 2004). Even with knowledge of

financial aid and admissions procedures, Vargas (2004) suggests these students often find

it difficult to manage deadlines and paperwork required to gain admission to college.

Transition to College Experience

Once enrolled in college, first-generation students continue to face obstacles when

integrating their background with the new college culture. London (1989), through a

qualitative study examining the role of family in the experience of first-generation

students in the Boston area, sought to understand "what is at stake – what is lost, gained,

fought for, and given to compromise – when, for the first time in the history of a family,

one of its members partakes of higher education" (p. 145). Many first-generation

students described guilt and internal and external conflict with the process of breaking

away from their families to attend college and form their own identities (London, 1989).

Rendon (1992) recounted her own experience as a first-generation college student and the

accompanying anguish of living in two worlds:

Subconsciously, I must have felt that the language of college did not belong in my

family life. The two were separate and incompatible. Reflecting on new learning while at

the same time coping with the feeling of not belonging made me more introverted (p. 58).

Rather than blame first-generation students for this lack of integration, Rendon (1992)

placed responsibility on institutions to acknowledge that academic success is not

dependent on a total disconnect from the past for students who find themselves in the

bifurcated experience through the transition to college.

In one of the earlier studies to examine transition, Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft,

Millar, Allison, Gregg and Jalomo (1994) held focus groups with132 diverse first-year

students at four different institution types. Although the experience of first-generation students was not the primary focus of the study, findings about this population were reported. Overall, first-generation students had a more difficult time adjusting to college than continuing-generation students, in part due to incongruence between their expectations of themselves and their families' expectations for them. Terenzini et al. (1994) suggested that academic, social and cultural transitions to college for first-generation students are different from those of other students, although practices at most colleges and universities assumed little difference in students. Consequently, first-generation college students could benefit from specific types of support both inside and outside the classroom to help with this transition (Terenzini et al., 1994).

In an analysis of the National Study of Student Learning data, collected from over 4,000 first- and continuing-generation students, Terenzini et al. (1996) reported that first-generation students expected to take longer to graduate and received less encouragement from families to attend college. Once enrolled, first-generation students took fewer courses their first year, studied fewer hours, and took fewer humanities or fine art courses. Terenzini et al. (1996) recommended that institutions identify ways to link first-generation students with faculty and staff who could validate the students' beliefs that they were "competent learners, that they can succeed, that they have a rightful place in the academic community, and that their background and past experiences are sources of knowledge and pride, not something to be devalued" (p. 17).

Pascarella et al. (2004) examined data from 2,500 first- and continuing-generation students who participated over a two-year period in the National Study of Student

Learning and concluded that the role of cultural capital is significant. "First generation students as a group have a more difficult transition from secondary school to college than their peers. Not only do first-generation students confront all the anxieties, dislocations and difficulties of any college student, their experiences often involved substantial cultural as well as social and academic transitions" (p. 250).

Nunez (2005), in a qualitative study of nine first-generation students at a large research institution, sought to understand further the role of social and cultural capital in transition. Through a variety of methods, including interviews, observation and review of journals of students in a first-year academic success course, Nunez (2005) reported that first-generation students in her study found it necessary to renegotiate their relationships with their families rather than separate from them. Students reported the importance of having resources on campus to help them navigate and acquire the bureaucratic knowledge of college – how to register for courses, how to study, how to approach faculty. Peer advisors and mentors were considered effective mediators of social and cultural capital for first-generation students (Nunez, 2005). Accessible support for first-generation students as well as family orientation were two ways in which institutions could help students with the transition to the culture of college (Nunez, 2005).

Retention and Persistence

It is likely that difficulty with transition may, in part, be reflected in lower retention and persistence rates for first-generation students, an area of increasing attention and study. Although study purposes and methodologies vary widely, research findings consistently point to lower persistence for first-generation students (Chen, 2005; Choy,

2001; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Chen (2005), after examining transcripts of students who participated in the National

Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, noted that first-generation students were more

likely to leave without a degree than continuing-generation students, 43 percent and 20

percent, respectively. Other indicators associated with retention and persistence

differences between first- and second-generation students included: greater need for

remedial coursework during the first year, 55 percent versus 27 percent; fewer credit

hours earned during the first year, 18 versus 25 credits; lower cumulative grade point

averages, 2.6 versus 2.9; and increased likelihood of withdrawing from or repeating

courses, 12 percent versus 7 percent (Chen, 2005). Choy (2001) reported that first-

generation students were more apt to leave after the first year than were continuing-

generation students. However, first-generation students who attended private institutions

were more likely to persist than their counterparts at public institutions (Lohfink &

Paulsen, 2005).

Adelman (2006) reported that college students overall were less likely to persist if

they earned fewer than 20 credits during their first year or if they repeated or withdrew

from courses. Ishitani (2003), in a longitudinal study of students at a large Midwestern

university, noted that attrition occurred over time, indicating that first-generation students

face risk of withdrawal throughout their college experience. Through an examination of

longitudinal data from the Postsecondary Education Transcript Study of 4,427 students

who initially enrolled in college 1991-1994, Ishitani (2006) further investigated the

attrition among first-generation college students, paying specific attention to the timing of

both withdrawal and graduation rates. First-generation students were 51 percent less likely to graduate from college in four years and 32 percent less likely to graduate in five years than their continuing-generation peers; students whose parents had no college experience were 8.5 times more likely to drop out than second-generation students (Ishitani, 2006). Ishitani (2006) identified the second year of college as the time when attrition was highest among first-generation students, noting that the drop out rate continued to be higher overall for first-generation compared to continuing-generation students when considering six-year graduation rates.

While lower levels of social and academic integration among first-generation students are attributed to many factors, including demographic ones described previously (academic preparation, aspirations, and family support), socioeconomic status and lack of financial resources that plays a significant role in the persistence of first-generation students. According to Chen (2005), half (50 percent) of first-generation students report family incomes of less than $25,000, compared to 7 percent of continuing-generation students. Declining financial aid and federal work-study funding, combined with a shift toward merit-based over need-based scholarship and grant funding, force many low-income, first-generation students to work while in college (Engle, 2007; Billson & Terry, 1982). Overall, first-generation students are "more likely to identify with and to be integrated into the world of work, they are more likely to put work over their studies when a conflict arises, and they are more likely to leave college before earning a degree to take a full-time job" (Engle, 2007 p. 34-35).

According to Engle (2007), unmet financial need increases the work burden for first-generation students, thereby limiting their academic and social integration. Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) found a positive correlation between retention and federal work-study, citing greater connections to campus faculty and staff as a by-product of on-campus work for first-generation students. Further, Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) determined that increases in financial aid (grants and federal-work study) positively impact persistence while increases in loan debt negatively impact persistence among first-generation students. Shouldering this financial burden renders first-generation students more likely to live and work off campus or to take classes part-time while working full-time (Chen, 2005, Choy, 2001; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). Pascarella et al. (2004) found that first-generation students who work while attending college experience stronger negative implications than continuing-generation peers, citing a direct correlation between number of hours worked and persistence. Specifically, students who worked 1-20 hours a week persisted at higher rates than students who worked 21 or more hours a week (Pascarella et al., 2004). The downward trend of available federal student aid is unlikely to reverse, and paying for college will continue to place first-generation students from low-income backgrounds at a disadvantage.

Engle and Tinto (2008) drew upon data from three national datasets (National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Beginning Postsecondary Students Study, and Baccalaureate and Beyond Study) to examine 4.5 million first-generation, low-income (below $25,000) students. First-generation, low-income students were more four times more likely to leave after their first year than their peers. After six years, 43 percent of

first generation, low-income students left college, resulting in only 11 percent of first-generation, low-income students earning a bachelor's degree compared with 55 percent of continuing-generation, higher income students (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Moreover, despite reporting aspirations to seek a graduate degree, 21 percent of first-generation students enrolled in graduate programs compared to 36 percent of continuing-generation students. The disparities continue into graduate school, with 50 percent of first-generation students actually earning an advanced degree compared to 64 percent of continuing-generation students (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Summary of Literature Concerning Experiences and Outcomes

First-generation students are a complex population to identify, with many overlapping identities. While national datasets have provided and will continue to provide useful information about the demographic profile and broad outcomes for this population, qualitative studies will offer a more in-depth view of the lived experience for first-generation students. The literature indicates that significant differences exist from pre-college experiences and preparation to in-college experiences for this group. One of the most apparent yet surmountable differences is the lack of knowledge of the culture of college, or the "insider knowledge, the special language, and the subtle verbal and nonverbal signals that, after one has mastered them, make one a member of any in-group, community or subculture" (Davis, 2010, p. 29). Pre-college characteristics in combination with difficulty adjusting to academic, social and cultural demands of college lead to lower persistence rates among this population.

Working-Class Culture of Origin and Dominant Campus Culture

Although the experiences and outcomes reported in the previous literature area may be associated with first-generation students, they are not necessarily representative of culture of origin for students from working-class backgrounds. Studies that consider social and cultural capital as deficits to be overcome by first-generation students represent a small component of the much broader topic of culture of origin and its influence on the experiences and outcomes for these students. To understand the magnitude of challenges facing many first-generation students, it is important to delve more deeply into the role of socioeconomic status and working-class background as precursors to social and cultural capital. This second literature area considers social class and its associated culture as factors impacting transition to higher education for first-generation students. Cohen (2009) noted that defining culture is "exceptionally tricky" (p. 194) but concluded that socioeconomic status and social class, along with religion and geographic region, are especially influential to cultural development and associations. Income, education, and occupational prestige are the objective variables most often associated with socioeconomic status and social class (Cohen, 2009), with perception of one's social class a subjective yet important variable. Inequity in socioeconomic status, Cohen (2009) contends, "may be perceived not only in terms of tangible resources such as income but also in terms of structural aspects such as power, privilege, and social capital" (p. 197).

The underpinnings of social class become relevant as we consider the experience of students from working-class backgrounds and the unique barriers they face in higher

education. Education, particularly a college degree, is seen as the means to a better socioeconomic end. According to Gilbert (2011), a college degree brings an increase of almost 50 percent over the earnings of a high school graduate. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on Socioeconomic Status (2007), "the belief that anyone, regardless of his or her socioeconomic history or social position, can make it to the 'top' if he or she works hard is undoubtedly one of the most cherished beliefs in the U.S. Evidence to the contrary seems to do little to deter this deeply held cultural belief" (p.7). Class disparities in education have proven resilient despite efforts to eliminate them (Gilbert, 2011). Although social class is less associated with income than with type or prestige of occupation held, income is still used as an identifier when considering socioeconomic status. In 2000, Gilbert (2011) reports, 75 percent of the 18-24 year-olds from the highest income quartile (top 25 percent), were enrolled in or had completed a year or more of college; only 35 percent of those of the same age from the lowest income quartile (bottom 25 percent) were enrolled or had completed a year or more of college. The disparities for college completion are even greater: 50 percent for the highest quartile and 10 percent for the lowest (Gilbert, 2011). Ashtiani and Feliciano (2012), using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health collected over a 14-year period from 1994-2008, confirmed that educational attainment varied by socioeconomic background. Additionally, enrollment in four-year institutions, a factor positively correlated with college completion, varied by socioeconomic class with those from lower classes attending four-year institutions at a much lower rate than their wealthier counterparts (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2012).

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Defining Class and Status

Social class, however, is seldom addressed when considering diversity in higher education. Yet stratification of society has deep roots, going back to ancient philosophy, where chances for good things in life are shaped by class position (Gilbert, 2011). As a pioneer sociologist, Max Weber was among the first scholars to connect social class to "life chances" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 2), although Karl Marx was among the first to articulate in the mid-1800's what became the foundation for modern-day class structures. Weber is credited with making a crucial distinction between *class* and *status* (Gilbert, 2011). Class, according to Weber, was closely associated with economic position; social class, then, "becomes a group of people who share the same economically shaped life chances" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 8). In contrast to class, which is determined by economic position and the life chances derived from that economic position, Weber defined status as a "subjective phenomenon, a sentiment in people's minds" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 9). Gilbert (2011), in summarizing the Weber's conceptualization of class and status, notes that "although members of a class may have little sense of shared identity, the members of a status group generally think of themselves as a social community, with a common lifestyle" (p. 8).

According to Gilbert (2011), Weber theorized that class and status were opposing principles. Since class is objective and based on economic order, it has no relation to status, which is subjective and based on the premise that some people are "better off" than others (Gilbert, 2011). In actuality, class and status are intertwined. Social class is more commonly defined as "groups of families, more or less equal in rank and

differentiated from other families above or below them with regard to characteristics such as occupation, income, wealth and prestige" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 11). Ultimately, social class is determined not by income level but by the *source* of the income.

The evolution of the American class structure mirrors this notion that types of jobs produce specific social groupings. Although various models of class structure exist, Gilbert (2011) offers six classes: capitalist class, upper-middle class, middle class, working class, working poor, and underclass. The upper capitalist class, the smallest group with only 1 percent of the population, holds the greatest concentration of capital and economic assets. The upper middle class constitutes about 15 percent of the population and is comprised of high-level managers, professionals and business owners. The middle and working classes, differentiated by the types of jobs held, are the largest groups with 60 percent of the population within the two classes. Middle-class workers are lower-level managers, semiprofessionals, craftsmen, and nonretail sales individuals; working-class individuals hold low-skill manual labor, clerical and retail sales positions. The bottom 25 percent of the population is considered working poor, holding the lowest-paying jobs (manual, retail or service) or unemployed. Middle and working class – commonly characterized by office versus factory jobs – have become economically less distinct over time (Gilbert, 2011), suggesting that middle class is distinguished from working class by a combination of job security and freedom from tedium or routine at work.

Class Matters (2005), a year-long investigative report by *The New York Times*, sought to provide a current understanding of social class in America, offering that social

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class is commonly accepted or defined as the "big three – the upper, the middle, and working classes" (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005, p. 8). While careful not to oversimplify the class structure, the report acknowledges that dozens of microclasses, defined by occupations or lifestyle, comprise the U.S. social class system. While some experts believe the concept of social class is meaningless, others consider failure to acknowledge social class a naïve approach. Scott and Leonhardt (2005) offer:

> One way to think of a person's position is society is to imagine a hand of cards. Everyone is dealt four cards, one from each suit: education, income, occupation, and wealth, the four commonly used criteria for gauging class. Face cards in a few categories may land a play in the upper middle class. At first, a person's class is his parents' class. Later, he may pick up a new hand of his own; it is likely to resemble that of his parents, but not always. (p. 9)

Noting the long-held notions of upward mobility and meritocracy that pervade American culture, or that position in society is based on talent and hard work, Scott and Leonhardt (2005) contend that murkiness exists when trying to delineate class structure. If a child is in a better financial position than his parents, class designation matters less. Nonetheless, they conclude, class and social position play a role in education and the investment parents make in their children.

Despite the lack of clear economic distinctions between working and middle class, cultural differences become less ambiguous upon close examination. The two social levels of middle and working class, according to Coleman (1983), represent distinct social worlds with different behavioral norms and lifestyles despite overlap in

income. Social skills, status aspirations, community participations, family history, recreational habits and physical appearance (APA, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Coleman, 1983), are as characteristic of class status as education credentials and occupation. Lareau (2011) posits that many are unaware of the social class benefits bestowed upon them, and instead they credit hard work and talent. Lareau (2011) contends, "Americans have, haltingly, developed a rudimentary language that allows us to 'see' and discuss racial and ethnic inequalities. But with respect to social class inequalities, which are equally powerful, we remain largely blind and nearly mute" (p. 311).

Cultural Differences Between Working and Middle Class

Scholars agree that class shapes experiences from early childhood and throughout a lifetime (Gilbert, 2011; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Children of the same class go to school together, play on the same sports teams, develop romantic attachments, and marry one another. A shared lifestyle and common values emerge from these shared experiences driven by class status. Gilbert (2011) refers to class-specific *socialization*, or the process of learning skills, attitudes and customs distinctive to the class, and *association*, or the pattern of regular interpersonal contact with those of the same class, as the drivers of class positions.

Bourdieu (1986) argues that individuals from different social positions are socialized differently, providing young adults with habitus, or a sense of what is comfortable or natural (Lareau, 2011). Habitus, as Bourdieu (1986) labels this socialization, shapes the amount of capital, or resources, individuals inherit and draw upon as they confront situations and institutions (Lareau, 2011). In contrast to the notion

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that disposition or privilege is earned through intelligence, hard work, or other personal attributes, Bourdieu (1986) contends that habitus is a set of learned dispositions toward "culture, society, and one's future that the individual generally learns at home and then takes for granted" (Lareau, 2011, p. 362). Habitus, then, is the precursor to cultural skills, social connections, educational practices, and other cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2011). While Bourdieu allows for the acquisition of new habits later in life, these "late-acquired dispositions lack the comfortable (natural) feel associated with those learned in childhood" (Lareau, 2011, p. 363). Habitus is central to distinguishing between middle-class and working-class cultures, particularly when considering the unique challenges faced by first-generation students as they transition to college.

Since habitus is comprised of learned internal dispositions, one aspect to consider is the way children are socialized by their parents. Lareau and Cox (2011) assert that research has failed to sufficiently recognize the role parents play in situating children, interacting with institutions, and mediating experiences for their children. Kohn (1969, 1976, 1977) and Kohn and Schooler (1983) studied the values parents impart to their children as a measure of class differences. While parental views varied at each class level, Kohn (1969) found distinct differences between working- and lower- class parents and middle- and upper-class parents (Gilbert, 2011, p. 103).

Middle-Class Pattern: Parental Values for Children	Working-Class Pattern: Parental Values for Children
Self-control	Obedience
Consideration of others	Manners
Curiosity	"Good student"
Happiness	Neatness, cleanliness
Parents' Own Value Orientations	Parents' Own Value Orientations
Tolerance of nonconformity	Strong punishment for deviant behavior

Open to innovation	Stuck to old ways
People basically good	People not trustworthy
Value self-direction	Believe in strict leadership
Job Characteristics	Job Characteristics
Work independently	Close supervision
Varied tasks	Repetitive work
Work with people or data	Work with things

Table 1: Typical Class Patterns in Parental Values and Occupations. Adapted from
"Socialization, Association, Lifestyles, and Values," by Gilbert, p. 103. *The American
Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality* (8th ed.). Copyright 2011 by Pine Forge
Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications.

Kohn (1969), whose original work has been validated through subsequent

research, characterized the differences in parental values broadly as instilling self-

direction (middle- and upper-class) or conformity (middle- and lower-class). In other

words, the focus on self-control and curiosity leads to self-direction among middle-class

children while the reverse, or focus on obedience and good manners, promotes

conformity among working-class children. Kohn further related these differences back to

the type of jobs held by those in different classes. This notion reinforces previous

distinctions made by Gilbert (2011) that class is associated with source of income, not the

amount of income earned. Kohn observed that "the essence of higher-class position is the

expectation that one's decisions and actions can be consequential; the essence of lower-

class position is the belief that one is at the mercy of forces and people beyond one's

control, often, beyond one's understanding" (p. 189). According to Gilbert (2011),

Kohn's findings were significant as they aligned class socialization with both education

and occupation, with occupation having the greatest influence on shaping social values.

Gilbert (2011) notes that when parents inculcate values on their children, they are, in

essence, preparing their children to assume the same class position as their own. Kohn (1969) and Gilbert (2011) posit that working-class parents are unaware of this underlying reinforcement of class position and, instead, believe these values will help their children with upward mobility in the class system.

Lareau (2003), as Kohn, studied class differences and socialization in relation to parenting. Cultivated growth, as introduced by Lareau (2003), is more closely associated with middle class parents while natural growth is more closely associated with working class or working poor parents. By definition, cultivated growth is characterized by parents who "hover over their children, scheduling their activities, fostering their talents, reasoning with them, and intervening on their behalf" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 106). In contrast, allowing children to develop naturally by providing a safe and stable environment with clear objectives and autonomy is the pattern found most often among working-class parents. Lareau (2003, 2011) suggests these differences significantly impact approaches to daily life, the use of language, and the relationship with educational institutions. While the approaches to daily activities and language cannot be discounted, it is the interactions with institutions that perhaps have the greatest impact on working-class culture and the educational system (Lareau, 2003, 2011; Lareau & Cox, 2011; Gilbert, 2011). Middle-class parents teach their children to be comfortable interacting with teachers and others in authority, feeling free to ask questions and make demands. Working-class parents are more likely to be intimidated by institutions and the professionals who represent them, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and fear. According to Lareau (2003), cultivated growth leads to a sense of entitlement in children of middle-class upbringings while

natural growth leads to a sense of constraint among working-class children. Gilbert (2011), summarizes Lareau's findings about socialization patterns among working-class children, "They have not been encouraged to cultivate formal language skills, to express their own opinions, or to question, challenge, or negotiate with adults. They have less experience than more privileged children with institutions, which they have been taught to regard with distrust" (p. 108).

In the second edition of her seminal work, *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau (2011) addresses how the cultivated growth approach versus the natural approach plays out for young adults transitioning to college. For middle-class students, applying to college is a family endeavor where parents continue to foster growth in their children by providing interventions and guidance for navigating the higher education environment. Those from working-class backgrounds, however, rely on school personnel and professionals to help them navigate the new environment. Although the overarching desire for a child to succeed transcends social class, working-class students and their parents have fundamentally different relationships with the education system, resulting in greater heartbreak for these children (Lareau, 2011). Working-class parents "were generally unable to prevent their children from being derailed from the higher education trajectory" (Lareau, 2011, p. 264), while middle-class children continued to see cumulative advantages from their parents' position or status. Lareau (2011) asserts that the advantages seen by middle-class children are not simply the result of child-rearing practices. Rather, she contends, educational institutions "prioritize and reward particular cultural traits and resources" or the different "cultural repertoires" students bring (p.265).

Stephens et al. (2012) expand on this notion of middle-class socialization in comparison to working-class socialization for students transitioning to college, defining the difference in terms of *independence* and *interdependence*. Children from middle-class backgrounds often see college as the opportunity to realize their individual potential in a cultural milieu that "may seem intuitive, right or natural" (p. 1179). College students from working-class backgrounds, according to Stephens et al. (2012), "are likely to have been socialized with different rules of the game – rules that do not emphasize independence but instead emphasize interdependence, including adjusting and responding to others' need, connecting to others, and being part of a community" (p. 1179). middle-class backgrounds advantages these students in the transition to college while norms of interdependence among students from working-class backgrounds disadvantages these students. Cultural mismatch theory proposed by Stephens et al. (2012) makes three claims: university culture reflects middle-class norms of independence; students will experience cultural match when their norms align with those of the university and cultural mismatch when norms do not align; and cultural match or mismatch positively or negatively impacts student performance. Further, according to Stephens et al. (2012), messaging from colleges about expressing yourself, finding your passion, and doing your own thing perpetuates independence as the cultural ideal. Through a series of four studies employing diverse methods of inquiry over several years, Stephens et al. (2012) validated the premise of cultural mismatch, concluding that "university culture itself – through its focus on middle-class cultural norms of

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independence – plays a pivotal role in creating and reproducing the very social class inequalities that universities hope to alleviate (p. 1192).

Culture Privileged on College Campuses

Bourdieu (1986) elaborates on the power differences implicit with social class position, contending that schools are not socially neutral institutions but a reflection of the more privileged class. Musoba and Baez (2009) posit that educational scholars often misinterpret Bourdieu's emphasis on institutions as perpetuators of class structures. Rather than situating the problem as a matter of social class, individuals are blamed for not having the proper cultural traits or resources to persist in higher education. Instead, according to Musoba and Baez (2009), institutions perpetuate class stratification through cultural and symbolic distinctions, most of which are not overt. Higher education institutions, then, become agents for social hierarchies to reproduce themselves and perpetuate the current class structure through their cultural milieus that privilege "verbal competence, cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, knowledge about school, and educational credentials" (Musoba & Baez, 2009, p. 156).

Tierney (1988), in a discourse intended to identify the essentials of organizational culture in higher education, and Peterson and Spencer (1990), in delineating the differences in campus culture and climate, concur that the unique and distinctive nature of higher education results in culture that is complex, elusive, deeply embedded, and enduring. Collectively, scholars agree that campus culture shapes the experiences for students (Guiffrida, Kiyama, Waterman & Museus, 2012). Kuh and Hall (1993) define campus culture as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of institutional history,

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mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institution of higher education which provide a frame of reference for interpreting the meanings of events and actions on and off campus" (p. 2). Institutional culture, according to Kuh (2002), helps students make meaning of various events and activities, teaches them important information about what the institution stands for and how it works, and encourages them to perform in ways that will enable them to succeed academically and socially. While the impact of organizational culture on student persistence, satisfaction and achievement has not been thoroughly studied (Kuh, 2002), indications are students who are affirmed by the prevailing culture are more likely to persist. Despite affecting a wide range of activities from budgeting to fund-raising to teaching and learning approaches, culture is typically ambiguous with different groups interpreting the same events differently (Kuh, 2002). Attributing this discrepancy of interpretation to different cultures of orientation or origin among students, Kuh (2002) suggests "simple descriptions of an institution's cultural milieu typically fail to capture [campus] complexities and nuances" (p. 26). The greater question, Kuh (2002) challenges, is why student success is considered dependent on assimilation or willingness to adapt and conform to an institution's culture.

While there are many levels of institutional culture, Kuh (1990) attributes cultural differences between faculty and students as a primary source of incongruence between institutional culture and culture of origin for students. Austin (1990) offers that faculty operate within four different cultural frames, all of which must be considered holistically as they impact how faculty interact with students. The first frame is the culture of the

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academic profession, where pursuit, discovery and dissemination of knowledge are highly valued. Additionally, the academic profession values academic freedom and autonomy, intellectual honesty and fairness, collegiality, and service to society (Austin, 1990). The second culture within which faculty exist is that of their academic discipline. A major cultural force, academic disciplines have their own language, style, symbolism, socialization, and status (Austin, 1990). Organizational culture is the third operational milieu within which faculty operate (Austin, 1990). The fourth cultural frame stems from institutional type where mission, governance, academic standards and physical environment contribute to the overarching institutional culture (Austin, 1990).

Dee and Daly (2012), while acknowledging the cultural complexity inherent in higher education broadly, consider faculty as cultural agents for an institution. As such, faculty transmit cultural knowledge to students through their communications and interactions, which may, in turn, help students navigate the complex social systems and gain access to resources and opportunities (Dee & Daly, 2012). According to Dee and Daly (2012), these "tensions manifest themselves when the values of one culture are in conflict with the values of the other culture, or when knowledge and skills developed within the home culture are not valued by the campus culture" (p. 169). Faculty play an important role in helping students understand the norms and expectations within the college culture for academic work and for social and professional interactions (Dee & Daly, 2012).

Along with confirming that university culture privileges middle-class norms of independence through their research on cultural mismatch, Stephens et al. (2012) posit

that university culture is malleable. Although first-generation students from working-class backgrounds underperformed in studies when independent norms were propagated, subtle changes in university culture toward interdependence led to equal academic performance between first-generation and continuing-generation students. Incorporating messaging around interdependence along with independence through guidebooks, mission statements and course syllabi benefits first-generation students while not hindering continuing-generation students.

Cultural Dissonance for Working-Class Students

Institutional culture notwithstanding, students bring their own expectations, attitudes and values from their cultures of origin to the higher educational setting. Lamont and Lareau (1988), through their work primarily with primary and secondary education, contend that schools as social institutions favor those who enter with key social and cultural experiences while students without those experiences have to acquire the social and cultural capital privileged in the campus environment. The tension created between a student's cultural meaning-making system, or culture of origin, and the new cultural knowledge of college may result in cultural dissonance (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus et al., 2012). Ultimately, studies have shown that cultural dissonance has been inversely related to the likelihood of success for students of color (Berger, 2000; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus et al., 2012). Studies of first-generation students suggest that cultural dissonance may also be an issue with respect to transition.

As social roles are learned, not instinctual, the movement from one social class to another – a process implicit for many first-generation and working-class students during

the educational experience – can be particularly challenging for those from working-class backgrounds who find themselves alienated from their roots. Granfield, in a 1991 study about working-class law students at an elite institution, examined the relationship between personal identity and upward mobility. As part of an ethnographic study, Granfield drew from his personal experiences as a law student from a working-class background, conducted in-depth interviews with fellow law students, and administered a survey examining backgrounds, motives for attending law school, among other things. Although the working-class students Granfield interviewed entered law school with a great sense of pride for their accomplishments, they soon began to consider their background to be a burden. Granfield (2005) attributes the lack of appropriate cultural capital as leading to a crisis in competency for these students. According to Granfield (2005), students from working-class backgrounds in his study perceived themselves as cultural outsiders, "lacking manners of speech, attire, values, and experiences associated with their more privileged counterparts" (p. 105). The resulting stigma led students in Granfield's study to admit hiding their social class circumstances, fearing ostracism if they were discovered. Yet, according to Granfield (2005), working-class students found it difficult to transcend their home culture or identity. They could neither embrace their group nor let it go and leading to a form of "identity ambivalence" (p. 108).

Lehmann (2007), in a study of Canadian higher education, sought to understand the role first-generation and working-class status played in persistence among college students. Lehmann (2007) centers his argument in Bourdieu's concept of habitus, or the

"disposition to act, interpret experiences, and think in certain ways" (p. 92), and contends,

> It could be theorized that working-class students experience a fundamental discontinuity between the values of their working-class habitus and their middle class goals and destinations. This should not simply be understood as working class students having had less access to highbrow aesthetic culture, as has often been the case in educational research using a narrow interpretation of Bourdieu's sister concept of cultural capital, but more importantly, as not possessing the 'right' middle-class attitudes, linguistic skills, attire, networks, and social skills. (p. 92)

By framing the problem as one of working-class habitus discontinuity rather than one of lacking certain knowledge, Lehmann (2007) reinforces the consideration of culture of origin as a barrier to successful transition to college. Through semi-structured interviews with 25 students between 2001 and 2003 who left a large research university, Lehmann (2007) identified similar struggles of not "feeling right" and not fitting in among first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. Lehmann (2007), drawing from Bourdieu's metaphor of 'feeling like a fish in water' when habitus and social world are in concert, employs the 'fish out of water' analogy to describe the situation where habitus and social world are not in alignment (p. 101).

Not appearing to fit in, according to Davis (2010), is "one of the biggest worries" expressed by first-generation students (p. 71), although modifying culture to accommodate these students is not a priority for most higher education institutions.

Oldfield (2007) suggests social class bias on college campuses usually is not accounted for or recognized, noting that high socioeconomic values dominate campus culture. Although colleges and universities may strive to create more economic diversity at their campuses, college for first-generation and working-class students requires a "cultural journey to a very different land" (Oldfield, 2007, p. 3). As a working-class college student who later became a college professor, Oldfield (2007) offers six lessons as emblematic of the working-class, first-generation student experience:

1. *I wish I had known the difference between "doctor" and "doctor,"* a lack of understanding that is symptomatic of status as a cultural outsider.

2. *I wish I had known the real purpose of college before I started,* or valuing knowledge for its own sake rather than for a better job.

3. *I wish I had known that teeth are such a strong social-class marker.*

4. *I wish I had known that college is not just for "smart people,"* but primarily for those who enter with skills necessary for academic and professional success.

5. *I wish I had known that higher education considered debate and argument integral to sound learning,* rather than being socialized to believe arguing is disrespectful.

6. *I with I had understood how the academy defines "work,"* or that the work of professors seems largely invisible since they do not fix cars, make toasters, or go home smelling of work.

According to Oldfield (2007), cognitive and non-cognitive skills, including motivation,

attitudes and social skills, are impacted by socioeconomic status and are the main
determinants of differences in educational opportunity.

Stuber (2006) sought to understand how college students make sense of social
class within the college environment, or specifically how cultural underpinnings of social
inequality are reflected in how students talk about social class. Stuber (2006) conducted
in-depth interviews with 60 White, traditional-aged students attending two Midwestern
institutions – half enrolled at a large public university and half enrolled in a small private
liberal arts college – and chose respondents from opposite ends of the socioeconomic
spectrum, providing a sample evenly divided between first-generation, working-class
students and non-first-generation, upper-middle-class students. Among the 28 working-
class respondents, six identified as middle class and 22 identified as poor to lower-middle
class; 12 of these identified as working class. Conversely, among the 32 upper-middle-
class students, 26 identified as upper-middle class, four identified as middle class and two
labeled themselves upper class. Stuber (2006) found that both groups of students "talked
about social class in ways that alternately acknowledged and rejected the significance of
social class" (p. 294), yet differences emerged relative to class awareness, class-
consciousness, and the kinds of symbolic boundaries they perceived.

Class awareness, or the tendency to see society as partitioned into two or more
classes with the ability to recognize and talk about class distinctions, was more apparent
in working-class students than in the upper-middle-class students (Stuber, 2006). For
upper-middle-class students, class differences were not part of their socialization process,
with half of these students acknowledging that they grew up around those of the same

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social standing and that the class differences were largely hypothetical. Class-consciousness, on the other hand, concerns whether and how social class matters. While students in Stuber's 2006 study talked about class in similar ways, their understandings of social class were markedly different. Privileged students claimed not to see class differences; working-class students "claimed the power to see social class" (p. 312). The students also tended to draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and those above. According to Stuber (2006),

> For upper-middle-class students, the tendency to draw boundaries against those above them may play into processes of social reproduction; for working-class students, although they are engaged in processes of social transformation, their boundary-drawing strategies hint at the possibility of leveled aspirations and the limiting of their own mobility. (p. 312)

Jenson (2012), a psychologist whose own cultural transition from working-class to middle-class serves as the backdrop for her research into classism, describes "crossing classes" as an invisible and unconscious process that can be painful, debilitating, and even devastating (p. 151). According to Jenson (2012), "most working class students start college because they want better work, not a change of culture" (p. 153). Yet the latter often occurs as a matter of survival for working-class students in the new college environment, creating distance between them and their families. Jenson (2012) attributes this distancing from home culture as a way to reckon dissonance. The harm, she notes, is that this disconnects students from their own histories:

This cultural barrier is at least as effective in shutting out wrong class people as the significant economic barriers to college education. To succeed in higher education one must learn to adopt and represent middle class culture as one's own. This culture does not grant dual citizenship. (p. 156)

Being unable to layer new experiences on top of old experiences, or create meaning of the transition to college culture experience, is the source of cognitive dissonance for many working-class students in higher education (Jenson, 2012). Cognitive dissonance, she argues, comes from trying "to balance conflicting parts of the self with two opposing worldviews" (p. 158) and is the source of lack of persistence among students from working-class backgrounds.

Summary of Literature: Working-Class and Campus Culture

Broadly, the examination of social class and educational opportunity is an area that warrants further investigation. While research on first-generation, low-income students and degree attainment has become more prevalent, social class is a far more complex variable to consider (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). The influence of social class is little-discussed among higher education scholars, and according to Paulsen and St. John (2002), represents a divergence from mainstream research. Bourdieu's theories of economic, cultural and social capital have withstood the test of time as have the stratification of the social classes, yet fewer associations have been drawn between habitus and transition to college. Family background influences college-going aspirations, college choices, major selections, and persistence (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). In actuality, most college-bound students have limited mobility, choice, and financial

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means. Moreover, Paulsen and St. John (2002) suggest, "the cultures and values or habiti that constitute students' early school and family environments have a substantial influence on the ways they frame and make educational choices" (p. 192).

College has long been considered a means for upward social mobility, although theorists such as Bourdieu argue institutions of higher education are more closely associated with social reproduction than social opportunity. Silva (2013), through her research on working-class youth and educational outcomes, posits that higher education has proven to be a "broken social contract" for many. Following interviews with 100 working-class young adults in Massachusetts and Virginia, Silva (2013) contends these individuals continue to lack "social support, skills, and knowledge necessary for success" and "are relinquishing the hope for a better future that is at the core of the American Dream." Reinforcing Lareau's claim that working-class youth lack access to resources, Silva (2013) writes,

> Though they feel betrayed and angry, strangely, their anger doesn't make them want to fight the system. Rather, they want to succeed in it, against the odds and on their own. They make a virtue out of self-sufficiency, embracing the ethos of competition and individual achievement that is at the heart of the American education system…. By taking sole responsibility for their fate, working-class youth resolve the contradiction between their high expectations and their disappointing reality. (para. 14-17)

Access to higher education, Silva (2013) suggests, is not enough to close the existing

social inequalities, especially if the experience leaves those from working-class backgrounds "stuck between hope and bitterness, anger and self-blame."

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Rather than consider a single grand theory to frame this study, relevant pieces from three theories will be woven into a conceptual framework. Bourdieu's theory of habitus as the essence of socialization will provide the lens through which transition and biculturalism theories will be explored. Rather than consider the culture of origin as a deficit to be overcome by first-generation students from working-class backgrounds entering college, this conceptual framework allows consideration of transition as a meaning-making process versus an assimilation process; biculturalism, or existing in two cultures simultaneously, allows for a deeper understanding of the intersection of two cultures as a measure of successful transition.

Bourdieu's Theory of Social Reproduction

The role of both cultural and social capital, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1986), is commonly associated with impacting transition for first-generation, low-income and minority students. Both cultural and social capital for students are distinctive from institutional culture (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Rendon, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996; Walpole, 2003). McDonough and Fann (1997) described cultural capital as the knowledge an individual possesses that is useful in school; Nunez (2005), Perna and Titus (2005), and Oldfield (2007) further defined cultural capital as knowledge about college that first-generation students do not possess. Cultural capital "refers to specialized or insider knowledge which is not taught in schools" and social

capital "is comprised of contacts and memberships in networks which can be used for personal or professional gain" (Walpole, 2003, p. 9). The cultural capital inherent to many first-generation students, which may result in the lack of knowledge about college, compounds or exacerbates other barriers that impede successful academic and social integration (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996).

According to Walpole (2003), each social class possesses social and cultural capital, which is passed on to children from parents. Furthermore, in most references to this phenomenon, it is a lack of the cultural or social capital privileged in higher education institutions that complicates the transition for first-generation students, suggesting that their parents cannot provide the knowledge, guidance and social context that tend to ease the transition to college. Lamont and Lareau (1988) contend that schools protect those who enter with key social and cultural experiences while students without those experiences have to acquire the social and cultural capital privileged in the educational environment, and this acquisition comes from outside, non-family resources. This lack of social and cultural capital is often reflected in the students' academic work, leaving some to erroneously presume these students lack academic ability (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Bourdieu's (1986) theory or social reproduction conceptualizes habitus, or a sense of what is comfortable or natural (Lareau, 2011). Individuals from different social positions are socialized differently, and habitus, as Bourdieu (1986) calls this socialization, shapes the amount of capital, or resources, individuals inherit and draw upon as they confront situations and institutions (Lareau, 2011). In contrast to the notion

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that disposition or privilege is earned through intelligence, hard work, or other personal attributes, Bourdieu (1986) contends that habitus is a set of learned dispositions toward "culture, society, and one's future that the individual generally learns at home and then takes for granted" (Lareau, 2011, p. 362). Habitus, then, is the precursor to cultural skills, social connections, educational practices, and other cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2011). While Bourdieu allows for the acquisition of new habitus later in life, these "late-acquired dispositions lack the comfortable (natural) feel associated with those learned in childhood" (Lareau, 2011, p. 363). Habitus, as the foundation for culture of origin, is central to distinguishing between middle-class and working-class cultures, particularly when considering the unique challenges faced by first-generation students from working-class backgrounds as they transition to college.

Transition as a Meaning-Making Process

Transition to college has been studied through multiple frames, beginning with integration and adaptation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1993), followed by cultural integrity (Kuh & Love, 2000; Tierney, 1992; Tierney, 2000) and, more recently, cultural integration (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus et al., 2012). To fully understand how culture impacts integration for first-generation students, it is important first to define transition and to understand the conceptual framework surrounding the process.

Princeton University's online lexical reference system, *Wordnet*, assigns five varying senses or meanings to the word transition:

Sense 1: passage (act of passing from one state to another); changing something

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into something.

Sense 2: conversion, transformation, alteration, shift.

Sense 3: happening, occurrence, change.

Sense 4: modulation, or change in tone.

Sense 5: connects to what follows, extracting common features.

Although transition is a word that is used in diverse ways and for a breadth of circumstances, it is usually associated with a process of change (Kralik et al., 2006).

Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman (1995) define transition as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 27). Change, in and of itself, is not transition; it is the significance and context attached to change that constitutes a transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995). In other words, transition is not just another word for change, but rather transition connotes the psychological processes involved in adapting to the change event. Kralik et al. (2006) reinforce the notion that transition is not a linear or simple process but one that involves people's responses during a passage of change, emphasizing that change occurs over time and entails adaptation or the reconstruction of self-identity. "We define transition as a process of convoluted passage during which people redefine their sense of self and redevelop self-agency in response to disruptive life events" (Kralik et al., 2006, p. 321).

Bridges (2004) notes that transition is directly associated with an individual's awareness that changes are taking place, causing a chosen or forced new reality. Awareness is followed by engagement, where those involved in change seek information or support, identify new ways of living and being, modify former activities, and make

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sense of the circumstances (Bridges, 2004; Kralik et al., 2006). Acknowledgement "that a prior way of living/being has ended, or a current reality is under threat, and that change needs to occur" (Kralik et al., 2006, p. 323) is central to the transition process; lack of awareness may signal that an individual is not ready for change (Bridges, 2004).

Davis (2010) contends that the transition to college for first-generation students is a complicated matter of changing reality and identity. First-generation students go to college with the promise of upward mobility and with full knowledge that they are embarking on a change that will make them different from their family. Yet the transition process to the new reality is fraught with complexity that may include feelings of inferiority and crises of confidence for these students (Davis, 2010). London (1992) addressed the issue of upward mobility as problematic for first-generation students, noting personal and social dislocation were at stake:

> It soon becomes apparent, however, that old relations are changing and that new ones must be forged. It is only when we see that negotiating cultural obstacles involves not just gain but loss – most of all the loss of a familiar past, including a past self – that we can begin to understand the attendant periods of confusion, conflict, isolation, and even anguish reported by first-generation students. (p. 10)

Becoming oriented or transitioning to college can take a long time for first-generation students, particularly as they come to terms with the changing nature of relationships with others and evolving identities.

Transition as a Factor in Persistence and Retention

Since its introduction in 1987, Tinto's theory of retention has dominated transition

literature for first-time college students, relying on the premise that students must disassociate from their home cultures and assimilate into the dominant culture of college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Tinto (1987) noted that the reasons for student departure from college were not static during the first year of college or even over time, despite commonly held beliefs to the contrary, and the first six months of college are an especially important period in determining overall student persistence (Tinto, 1987). VanGennep (1960), a Dutch social anthropologist who was concerned with movement of individuals within societies from birth to death and whose work served as a backdrop for Tinto's theory of persistence, introduced rites of passage as a way to explain socio-cultural rituals associated with transitions through the different stages of life (Tinto, 1987; Kralik et al., 2006). Van Gennep's rites of passage are characterized by three distinct phases: separation, or removal from the normal social life; transition, or a state of limbo resulting in confusion and alienation; and incorporation, or reintroduction to society with new status or roles. Martin-McDonald and Biernoff (2002) state "that rites of passage occur when there is a transition in cultural expectations, social roles, and status and/or condition or position, interpersonal relations, and developmental or situational changes to being in the world" (p. 347).

Drawing from Van Gennep's rites of passage, Tinto (1987) posited that student departure during the first year of college was related to the movement of membership from one group to another. According to Tinto (1987), individuals who must give up the norms and beliefs of past associations and who have not yet adopted the norms and

beliefs appropriate for the new community are often left in a state of "temporary

normlessness" (p. 442). It is the lack of "normlessness" that often leads to departure.

Separation from past associations was at the core of Tinto's original theory of

persistence; in order to make the transition and eventual incorporation into college,

students must disassociate themselves from membership in past communities (Tinto,

1987). Rendon et al. (2000), in critique of Tinto's use of this conceptual frame, posited

that Van Gennep's rites of passage theory assumes that values and beliefs of a cultural

background must be abandoned to successfully incorporate the values and beliefs of the

culture of the institution and its predominant membership; that there is one "dominate"

culture; and that contact with the culture of origin will lessen over time to facilitate the

transition to the dominant culture. Instead, Rendon et al. (2000) contend, biculturalism

and dual socialization should be taken into account when considering transition,

abandoning the notion that students must become members of the dominant culture to

succeed.

Tinto (1987) did not espouse that the transition process was easy for all students.

Rather, he posited that "stress and sense of loss and bewilderment, if not desolation" (p.

444) could lead to departure from college and lack of persistence, especially for those

students from minority backgrounds or from very poor families. In response to criticism

of the proposed monoculture in his original model, Tinto (1993) revised his theory to

suggest that students could successfully transition if they found subcultures or enclaves to

join that were more aligned with their culture of origin. Rather than conforming to a

single dominant culture, Tinto (1993) proposed students needed to find membership and

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support in a community with shared values. Even with this revision from integration to membership, the ease of transition depends on many factors, according to Tinto (1987, 1993), foremost among which is the perceived difference between the norms and patterns of the past and those required for incorporation into the new community. Tinto (1987), as with Bridges (2004), noted the importance of awareness that change was occurring as a factor in the transition process. Nonetheless, Tinto (1987, 1993) implied that students choose whether to adopt the norms, values and behaviors expected in college, a position thought to oversimplify cultural transition.

Tinto's theory of assimilation and acculturation has been challenged by other scholars who claim students carry too much responsibility for a successful transition while institutions have little responsibility. Tierney (1992, 1999), through an examination of the experience for students of color at predominantly White institutions, challenged this notion of transition and cultural integration, positing that it placed a disproportionate amount of responsibility on the student to adapt and placed little to no responsibility on the institution to modify norms, values or expectations to respond to different student needs (Kuh & Love, 2000; Tierney, 2000). VanGennep's rites of passage, Tierney (1999) claimed, was not the best model for comparison since it concerned the movement from one social group to another within the same culture, not the integration into a foreign culture, as college is often considered. To succeed in college, students need to have financial means, to be individually oriented, and to possess specific requisite skills to assimilate into the academic culture (Tierney, 1999). In short, Tierney (1999) critiqued, cultural backgrounds that were not akin to the dominant culture

of college were irrelevant under Tinto's model. Tierney (1999) proposed, instead, cultural

integrity that espoused neither assimilation nor abandonment of culture of origin by

individuals but the creation of culturally inclusive environments by the institutions.

Tierney's theory of cultural integrity has further evolved conceptually to cultural

integration, or the intentional incorporation of cultural, academic and social aspects of

students' lives into the institution (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus et al., 2012). As

with Tierney's work, research directed to racial and ethnic cultures for students of color

in opposition to the dominant culture of a college campus serves as the conceptual

framework for considering cultural integration broadly. Museus et al. (2012) offer three

connected and essential elements of cultural integration: diverse cultural backgrounds and

identities are embedded within the academic environment; academic, social and cultural

aspects of student lives are reflected in spaces, courses, projects and activities; and third,

institutions and their faculty, administrators and staff bear responsibility for creating

culturally inclusive academic and social environments. Failure to engage diverse cultural

backgrounds can lead to cultural dissonance, or "tension due to the incongruence between

students' cultural meaning-making systems and the new cultural knowledge they

encounter, and such dissonance is inversely related to the likelihood of success" (Museus

et al., 2012, p. 110).

Transition as a Non-Linear, Meaning-Making Process

The concept of transition as a linear, three-stage process with a beginning, middle

and end continues to influence thinking about transition but has come under scrutiny by

some scholars. Recalling the definition proffered earlier by Kralik et al. (2006), transition

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is a more intricate or convoluted process with forward and backward movement that results in reorientation or redefinition of self. In contrast to the traditional *life span* or *age-stage* perspectives of adult development that dominate much of the literature, Anderson et al. (2011) propose the *transition perspective* as a way to consider adult psychosocial development, associating transition with life events rather than with life-stages or passages.

Schlossberg (1981, 1991) is among the transition theorists who consider life events as precursors to personal change, and her transition theory is a counterpoint to age and stage perspectives. Consistent with other transition models, Schlossberg's theory states that transition provides opportunities for personal growth and development (Evans et al., 2012). According to Schlossberg (1981), anticipated, planned and predicted events as well as unanticipated or nonscheduled events can precipitate transition, but a positive outcome cannot be assumed. Evans et al. (2012) note that transitions may lead to growth, but decline is also a possible outcome. Additionally, Schlossberg (1981, 1991) posits that transition is affected by the interaction of three sets of variables: the individual's *perception* of the transition, characteristics of the pre-transition and post-transition *environments*, and *personal characteristics* of the individual experiencing the transition, all bringing assets, liabilities, or a mix of the two that influence the ability to cope with a particular transition (Evans et al., 2012).

Taking into account the larger context, including socioeconomic and cultural differences, Schlossberg's theory of transition includes letting go of former roles and learning new roles, with individuals renegotiating roles throughout the process (Anderson

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et al., 2011). "The process of leaving one set of roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions and establishing new ones takes time (p. 49)," according to Anderson et al. (2011). It is during this process that people begin "to reconcile the paradox of holding onto both the comfortable and uncomfortable to fully self-organize" (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 49). A transition, Anderson et al. (2011) contend, is not so much a matter of change as of the individual's perception of the change. In other words, transition is individually defined and understood. Because Schlossberg's theory places so much emphasis on consideration of the individual's perspective and the context of the situation, it allows for the integration of individual and cultural differences when considering transition (Evans et al., 2012). Yet, due to the complexity of assessing individual perspective and context, research studies supporting the validity of Schlossberg's theory are scant, particularly in higher education.

Bridges (2004) built on Schlossberg's conceptual framework of transition as a process involving non-linear phases of moving in, moving through, and moving out (Anderson et al., 2011). Conceptualizing transition as occurring in three phases, Bridges (2004) places endings as the first phase of transition, followed by a second phase of confusion and a third phase of beginning or renewal (Anderson et al., 2011). The first phase, *endings*, involves disengagement, dis-identification, disenchantment, and disorientation, in no particular order. *Neutral zones*, as the second phase, represent a moratorium where individuals are suspended between old roles and emerging ones. Bridges (2004) describes this period as a time when "a person is betwixt and between," or letting go of old roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions but not yet fully immersed

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in new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 52).

Despite calling this second phase a period of neutrality, Bridges (2004) does not believe

this is a time of calm. Instead, he describes it "like being in a rudderless boat" (Anderson

et al., 2011, p. 52). The third phase of Bridges' transition theory, *beginnings*, is the time

when endings and neutrality are finished. As in Schlossberg's transition theory, Bridges'

theory allows for individual meaning making that relies heavily on situation and context.

Additionally, successful outcomes are dependent on an individual's perception of the

transition, the resources (tangible and non-tangible) available, and individual coping

abilities. Every transition, then, has the potential to be resolved "constructively or

destructively" (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 55).

As Anderson et al. (2011) contend, transition has no end point but rather is a

continuous process of assimilation and appraisal as individuals move in, through, and out

of it. It is not linear nor is it simply adapting to a new dominant culture and leaving

culture of origin behind. Cultural transition requires negotiation on an internal basis with

identity and on an external basis with the environment. Rendon et al. (2000) contend

cultural relocation may be highly traumatic if the move is made before an individual has

identified differences between their own culture and the new culture. According to

Rendon et al. (2000),

> Converging two worlds requires the use of cultural translators, mediators and role
>
> models to (1) provide information and guidance that can help students decipher
>
> college unfamiliar customs and rituals, (2) mediate problems that arise from
>
> disjunctions between students' cultural traits and the prevailing campus culture,

and (3) model behaviors that are amenable with the norms, values, and beliefs

of the majority and minority cultures. (p. 137)

This type of dual socialization or reconciliation of two cultures does not occur

naturally in a college environment that contains values, conventions, and traditions that

are alien to first-generation students, many of whom are minorities (Rendon et al., 2000).

Transition, then, is not the passage from one culture to another but rather a process of

meaning making about how to exist in more than one culture.

A defining factor of transition is the impact of the change event on lives. Davis

(2010) places the transition experience for first-generation students in an existential

frame. The simple question, "Why are you going to college?" presents difficult and

complex considerations for these students (Davis, 2010). College, considered a rite of

passage in American society and culture, is a time to consider "Who am I?" While the

answers to these two questions may be more closely linked for continuing-generation

students who have grown up with the expectation they would go to college, Davis (2010)

posits these are two very different questions for first-generation students. College is more

than a rite of passage for first-generation students; it is a time that will change their roles,

relationships, routines and assumptions about and with their past (Davis, 2010; London,

1992).

Biculturalism as a Desired Outcome

Biculturalism, or inhabiting two distinct cultures, is a concept that has been

discussed in the literature since the early 1900s (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993)

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and primarily associated with racial and ethnic cultures. Moving away from considerations of cultural transition as a linear process, early theorists were interested in understanding how individuals could live successfully in two cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993) without being marginalized. According to LaFromboise et al. (1993), five models have been used "to understand the process of change that occurs in transitions within, between, and among cultures" (p. 396): assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multiculturalism, and fusion.

Assimilation presumes that one culture is perceived as dominant, and that individuals lose their cultural identity as they immerse themselves into the new culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Tinto's theory of transition mirrored the tenets of the assimilation model of cultural transition. An underlying assumption with the assimilation model is that individuals experience stress and anxiety through the transition process as support inherent in the culture of origin diminishes while the newly acquired culture continues to feel foreign (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Acculturation, while similar to assimilation, does not presume that an individual will lose all association with their culture of origin or become a fully integrated member of the new, dominant culture. Instead, the culture of origin will become subservient to the new culture, leaving the individual to be considered a member of both the dominant and non-dominant cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The third model considered in studies of biculturalism, according the LaFromboise et al. (1993), is alternation. This model assumes an individual may adapt to and live successfully in two different cultures. Moreover, alternation allows for a sense of

belonging in two distinctive cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Rather than a

hierarchical relationship between the culture of origin and the new dominant culture, the

alternation model suggests "it is possible to maintain a positive relationship with both

cultures without having to choose between them" (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p. 399). The

ability to successfully navigate or alternate between cultures reduces the stress and

anxiety associated with the acculturation or assimilation models.

Multicultural and fusion are the fourth and fifth models used to conceptualize

biculturalism. The multicultural model is characterized by individuals maintaining

distinct identification with their of culture of origin while working in tandem with those

from the new culture for common purposes (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The fusion model

presumes that all cultural identities are amalgamated into a new culture where cultures of

origin are indistinguishable (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

LaFromboise et al. (1993) caution against considering each of these models as

mutually exclusive and posit, instead, that any one of the models may represent the

biculturalism process for individuals at various times. Bicultural competence, or living

successfully in two cultures, is most closely associated with the alternation model.

According to LaFromboise et al. (1993), Schlossberg's (1981) model of transition aligns

with the biculturalism process, noting that many factors including socioeconomic status

impact the development of competence. Additionally, LaFromboise et al. (1993)

acknowledge the individual nature of transition to biculturalism, noting that "individuals,

not groups, become biculturally competent" (p. 403) and suggesting that the process will

unfold differently for each individual. This, too, aligns with Schlossberg's theory of transition.

Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik (2010) looked broadly at the process of acculturation, defined in their work as "the changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences" (p. 237). As with the biculturalism process presented by LaFramboise et al. (1993), acculturation is no longer considered to exist on a continuum with culture of origin on one end and emerging culture on the other. Exposure to and acquisition of new cultural beliefs does not have to be at the expense of existing values, practices and beliefs of culture of origin. Schwartz et al. (2005) contend that biculturalism may take one of two forms: individuals may keep their cultural identities separate, similar to the assimilation model of LaFramboise et al. (1993), or individuals may blend or synthesize their cultural values, practices and beliefs into a uniquely blended culture, similar to LaFramboise's et al. (1993) fusion model. Biculturalism, in the latter form, results in higher self-esteem and lower stress (Schwartz et al., 2005).

When considering the cultural transition for low-income, first-generation students from working-class backgrounds, the concept of biculturalism emerges as feasible alternative to assimilation as presented by Tinto (1987, 1993). Furthermore, applying the principles of biculturalism to the college transition process for this student population infers that a successful college transition involves existing in two cultures simultaneously. While biculturalism is a desired outcome, a review of the extant literature

suggests that cultural adaptation can be fraught with anxiety and stress not unlike the ethnic cultural adaptation of immigrant individuals.

Lubrano (2004) applied the term "straddler" to this condition of living in two worlds – staying true to culture of origin while navigating the middle-class culture of college. Duality of inhabiting two worlds, according to Lubrano (2004), can be challenging, often leaving individuals without a sense of belonging in either world. Although this negotiation of working-class and middle-class identities is a lifelong process, Lubrano (2004) contends,

> Ideally, a Straddler becomes bicultural: Understand what made you who you are, learn to navigate the new setting. If you were to leave your family and completely give yourself over to the new mainstream, disavowing your background in the process, you'd risk distancing yourself from yourself. (p. 193)

Summary of Literature Review

Most research related to first-generation, low-income students is framed from a deficit perspective, blaming the student for not having the cultural or social capital to successfully transition to college. A growing body of literature is exploring more explicitly the role social class plays in the experience of first-generation, low-income students who enroll in college. The norms, values and beliefs associated with the working-class are inherently different than those associated with the middle or upper class and, consequently, those reflected on college campuses. The required cultural shift often leaves first-generation students at a loss and impacts their ability to make meaning of their transition to the privileged culture of college. Moreover, assimilation to or

acceptance of the new culture of college is a precursor to a successful or desirable transition. However, if habitus is a learned disposition that derives from socialization within a culture, its importance cannot be underestimated in the transition to college for students from working-class backgrounds. Biculturalism allows students to strive for successful existence in two worlds rather than deny culture of origin. Johnson (2010), echoing Lubrano's (2004) straddler concept, posits that low-income, first-generation students can find themselves "in the emotional hinterland between two worlds" (p. 128), a condition that can be mediated by intentional efforts aimed at confronting this confusion and emotional challenge during college transition process. This study aims to explore the connections between habitus, transition and biculturalism for first-generation students from working-class backgrounds.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Studs Terkel

Narrative inquiry is the methodological approach for this qualitative study of the transition to college for first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. Included in the section is the rationale for the use of a qualitative approach and research perspective. This section also presents the research design, including participant and site selection, data gathering procedures and data analysis procedures. This study is guided by the primary research question: How do first-generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds experience the cultural transition to college? Sub-questions:

- In what ways do first-generation students perceive their working-class backgrounds?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience the academic environments of college?

- In what ways to first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience the social environments of college?

- In what ways do the academic and social college experiences of first-generation students from working-class backgrounds shape their academic and social transition process?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds make meaning of the transition process?

Research Approach and Perspective

Qualitative research, as a method of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals attach to problems (Creswell, 2014), is appropriate for this study. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research allows for inductive reasoning and interpretation, focusing on the unique meaning each individual ascribes to problems or events. Assuming a social constructivist position, this study follows the premise that individuals, in seeking to understand the world in which they live and work, develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006; Mertens, 2010). These ascribed meanings, according to Creswell (2014), are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for individuality and complexity of views as opposed to simplicity or generalizability of findings. Context is equally important in the constructivist perspective. Creswell (2014) posits,

> Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives – we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. (p. 9)

A study seeking to understand how working-class culture of origin shapes the transition experiences for first-generation students fits within the constructivist perspective. An additional and equally important characteristic of social constructivism is acknowledging

the researcher's background and allowing it to shape interpretation, recognizing that interpretations flow from the researcher's own personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell, 2013). The constructivist researcher's intent, Creswell (2013) contends, is to "make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (p. 25).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative research methodology, is grounded in the premise that individuals come to understand and give meaning to their lives through stories – written, oral or visual (Josselson, 2006). Research employing narrative inquiry, however, is more than collecting and retelling stories; narrative methodology involves seeking to understand "the way in which a story is constructed, for whom and why, and the cultural discourses that it draws upon" (Trahar, 2009). Riessman and Speedy (2007) offer,

> The term *narrative* carries many meanings and is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, often synonymously with *story* (...) the narrative scholar (pays) analytic attention to how the facts got assembled that way. For whom was this story constructed, how was it made and for what purpose? What cultural discourses does it draw on—take for granted? What does it accomplish? (p. 428-429)

Narrative inquiry has historically been employed by sociologists and anthropologists as a way to understand culture – from presenting a story of a single event to presenting the story of one's life from birth to present (Chase, 2005). More recent uses

have been to focus on individuals or groups who experience oppression as a means to bring voice to that group. In other words, narrative inquiry is not intended to reflect a reality, but allows realities to be constructed or emerge through storytelling.

Creswell (2013) posits that narrative studies can be differentiated by the way in which the data are analyzed or by narrative approach (biography, autoethnography, life history, or oral history). According to Chase (2005), narrative inquiry differs from other methods of qualitative research by providing a distinctive perspective. Chase (2005) offers five ways in which this occurs. First, the analytical lenses for narrative research involve retrospective meaning making, or "shaping or ordering of past experience" (p. 656), and communicate the narrator's point of view. Narratives not only tell what happened, but offer emotions, thoughts and interpretations. Second, narratives give authentic voice to the narrator, downplaying facts and highlighting the narrator's version of "self, reality, and experience" (p. 657). Third, narrative researchers seek to identify similarities and differences across various narratives, recognizing that stories are "both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances" (p. 657). Fourth, the narrative becomes a joint production of the narrator and the storyteller, with the researcher or storyteller fully acknowledging that the narrator's story is "flexible, variable, and shaped in part by interaction with the audience" (p. 657). Finally, Chase (2005) contends, the researcher also becomes a narrator – interpreting, finding voice, and "performing" or writing for a particular audience.

Narrative inquiry, a desirable methodology through which to explore the lived experiences of first-generation students from working-class backgrounds in transition to

college, offers the opportunity to consider the role of culture and identity in a provocative or changing situation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posit that narrative inquiry in educational settings is more than seeking out and hearing a story. "Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Elements from three theoretical concepts, as presented in Chapter 2, will be foundational in this research. Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social reproduction will provide the lens through which transition and biculturalism are explored among first-generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds. This conceptual framework further allows for consideration of transition as a meaning making process (Evans et al., 2010; Schlossberg, 1984; Bridges, 2004) versus an assimilation process, with biculturalism (LaFramboise et al., 1993), or existing in two cultures simultaneously, as a measure of successful transition.

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction considers the way in which social stratification is perpetuated by societal structures such as educational institutions. To be successful within these structures, Bourdieu (1986) contends that individuals must possess economic capital (money or wealth), cultural capital (knowledge of a dominant culture), and social capital (networks of acquaintances). At the core of an individual's social class is habitus, or a "common set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same group or class that shapes an individuals expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 9). Soria (2013) argues that students from

lower/working-class backgrounds encounter challenges with the middle-class habitus of higher education that, in turn, will compromise their sense of belonging and integration and ultimately their persistence and college completion.

The lack of cultural capital that is privileged on most college campuses is often considered the primary factor contributing to lower college completion rates among first-generation students (Berger, 2000). Nonetheless, cultural capital can be acquired through support provided by outside organizations that help first-generation, low-income students access high education. Through recruitment of participants who are served by a college access and success organization, this study presumes access to cultural capital for participants and focuses, instead, on the role of habitus, or the learned dispositions from a home culture that may impact the transition to college for first-generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds.

Transition is associated with change but change, in and of itself, is not transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995; Kralik et al., 2006). The assigned significance and context, or meaning, distinguish transition from change. Schlossberg's theory of transition, in opposition to age and stage theories of adult development, is a psychosocial development model that presents transition as an opportunity for growth where a positive outcome is not assumed (Evans et al., 2010). Concerned more with how individuals experience or make meaning of transition, Schlossberg (1984) identified three variables that impact the process: "the individual's perception of the transition, characteristics of the pretransition and posttransition environments, and characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 213).

Schlossberg's theory was further refined to consider how type, context and impact create individual meaning of transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995; Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006). According to Goodman et al. (2006), there are three types of transitions: those that are anticipated or planned; those that are unanticipated or sudden; and those that stem from a nonevent where something anticipated did not occur. For first-generation college students from working-class backgrounds, entering college would be an anticipated event. The individual's relationship to the transition, Goodman et al. (2006) suggest, generates context while the impact depends on how much the transition alters daily life. While transition can be a positive growth experience, it can also be fraught with difficulty as individuals negotiate a new reality that can be disconcerting and difficult to navigate (Schlossberg, 1984; Evans et al., 2010). It follows, then, that transition to the middle-class culture of college forces a change to the working-class student's reality, and this change can be extremely difficult for students to navigate (Davis, 2010; Soria, 2013).

A successful transition, as the desired outcome, is one where first-generation students experience a dual socialization, or "maintaining connection with their families, while simultaneously supporting the thing they need for themselves in their new middle-class worlds" (Lubrano, 2004). Bicultural theory allows for flexibility in how individuals negotiate two cultures: assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multiculturism, and fusion (LaFramboise et al., 1993), as detailed in Chapter 2. Just as Schlossberg's theory of transition individualizes the process, bicultural competency is an equally individualized process. LaFramboise et al. (1993), in a survey of extant literature on bicultural theory,

identified six factors associated with bicultural competency: knowledge of cultural beliefs and values imbued in each culture; positive attitudes toward both cultures; belief or confidence that it is possible to live in both cultures while not sacrificing one for the other; ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally within each culture; assumption of roles or behaviors appropriate for each culture; and formation of stable networks within each culture. Bicultural competence, if achieved, takes years to develop (LaFramboise et al, 1993). This study did not propose that first-generation students from working-class backgrounds would achieve bicultural competency through the first-semester of college transition process. Rather, this study explored transition not as a problem of pre-college characteristics but as a problem of cultural transition.

Research Design

This study examined habitus and working class culture as factors in transition, and it is important to limit the conflation of these issues with the traditional transition considerations of cultural capital and social capital deficits among low-income, first-generation students. To ensure this study focused on habitus and working-class culture, sites and participants were selected purposively from a group of institutions served by a not-for-profit organization that provides personalized guidance and support services to low-income, first-generation students from urban areas who desire to attend college. Through programming designed to help students apply to, enroll in and complete college, the organization's mission is to close the college completion gap for low-income, first-generation students. The organization recruits students from urban public high schools during the junior year and assists them with applications, financial aid, scholarships, and

the overall college admissions process. Once enrolled, the support continues with regular interaction between students and the organization's counselors. Students attend both public and private universities and receive ongoing support throughout their college years and into career exploration and placement. Effectively, the organization facilitates the acquisition of cultural capital often associated with success in college and frequently considered absent in low-income, first-generation students. Recruiting study participants from this college access and success organization allowed me to control for acquired cultural capital and minimize the likelihood that a lack of college knowledge accounts for the transition experience among participants.

Site Selection Criteria

Two sites were selected for this study – a private four-year institution and a public four-year institution in the New England area. Both sites are liberal arts institutions with predominantly undergraduate populations. The public institution chosen for this study is located outside a major metropolitan area and is classified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a selective, medium-sized master's university that is largely residential. With nearly than 10,000 undergraduates, the public university's student population is 60 percent women and 18 percent students of color. More than 90 percent of the students are residents of the state where the institution is located, and more than one-third of first-time, first-year freshmen are first-generation college students with parents reporting no education beyond a high school diploma. The liberal arts public institution carries an 81 percent freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate.

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The private institution, located within a metropolitan area, is classified as a more selective, baccalaureate institution that is largely residential. With nearly 3,000 undergraduate students, the religiously-affiliated institution has an even split of men and women and 23 percent students of color. As a private institution, 60 percent of all students qualify for financial aid, and 63 percent of the student population has an out-of-state residency status. The college reports a 95 percent first-year to second-year retention rate.

Choosing both a private and public institution facilitated comparison of the experiences of first-year students from working class backgrounds at the different institution types. Equally important was the choice to limit this study to first-generation, low-income students transitioning as resident students to a four-year institutions, acknowledging that the college transition process is different in a traditional setting than in a two-year or four-year commuter setting.

Participant Description

Three participants were selected from the private institution and five students were selected from the public institution. The sample was purposefully drawn and recruited from the students who are supported by the not-for-profit college access and success organization. Working through the counselors of the college access and success organization, students were solicited to participate. Criterion sampling (Mertens, 2010) was employed to make certain participants fit the study's definitions for first-generation, low-income and working class. The first determining criterion was that neither parent has

education beyond a high school degree; the second determining criterion was low-income, as determined by Pell Grant eligibility.

Recruitment of participants was facilitated by contact through counselors working for the access and success organization. An additional participant was selected through snowball sampling (Mertens, 2010). In this circumstance, a participant recommended another student who was served by the same college access and success organization, although the home city for the organization was not the same. All recommended participants met the same defining criteria for inclusion in the study: first-generation and working-class, defined as neither parent or guardian having education beyond high school, and low-income, defined as Pell Grant eligibility. Participants were chosen in the hope they would confirm or disconfirm what is known about habitus and working-class culture in the specific context of transition. Additionally, participants are identified by pseudonyms of their choosing (Appendix F).

Although it was not the intention of this study to include only students of color, the selection resulted in this outcome. Additionally, three of the eight participants are foreign-born immigrants who seek permanent residency in this country; two of the eight are born in the U.S. with foreign-born or immigrant parents (Kim & Diaz, 2013). This composition of participants is important to note as it impacts the outcomes of the study. While the study was not designed to interrogate intersectionality of identities, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the presence of other factors that may impact transition to college for the study participants.

Participant	Custodial Parent	Institutional Type	Race/Ethnicity/Immigrant Status	Gender
Anna	Both	Private	Asian American/ Immigrant Parents	Female
Fili	Father	Public	African/Foreign-born Immigrant	Female
Jay	Mother	Private	African American	Male
Karley	Mother	Public	African American	Female
Kimberlye	Father	Public	Haitian/Foreign-born Immigrant	Female
Mackenzie	Both	Private	Asian American/ Immigrant Parents	Female
Michelle	Mother	Public	African American	Female
Neymar	Mother	Public	Cape Verdean/Foreign-born Immigrant	Male

Table 2. Study Participants' Demographic Profiles.

Data Collection Procedures

Three data collection methods were used for the study – demographic questionnaire (Appendix A), two semi-structured interviews, and virtual go-along site visits. The first round of interviews were conducted fall 2015 during the student's first year in college (Appendix B). Questions were grouped into four categories: habitus, first-generation identity; transition; and biculturalism. A second round of interviews was conducted later that same semester with broad follow up questions (Appendix C). The demographic questionnaire was completed during the first interview and reviewed for any changes during the second interview.

As a peripheral-member-researcher, observation and interaction provided me with an insider's perspective without participating in core activities. Body language, nonverbal cues, and information interactions were observed. Field notes facilitated recollections of

setting, activities, and interaction; memos were kept for initial interpretations of observations (Mertens, 2010).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Mertens, 2010; Fontana & Frey, 2005) were used to determine how first-generation students from working-class backgrounds were making meaning of the transition experience. The interviews were semi-structured to allow consistency in data collection while offering flexibility to explore experiences in greater depth. Probing students to understand ways in which they were processing their culture of origin in relationship to the academic and social transition was central to the interview.

Although this is primarily a narrative study, I intended to complement the formal interviews with a technique grounded in phenomenological and ethnographic research, the go-along or walking interview. Kusenbach (2003) defines a go-along as a research tool that combines the strengths of ethnographic observation with a deeper understanding of an everyday lived experience. Carpiano (2009) defines walking interviews, or go-along interviews, as "a form of in-depth qualitative interview method that, as the name implies, is conducted by researchers accompanying individual informants on outings in their familiar environments, such as a neighborhood or larger local area" (p. 264). Mertens (2010) posits ethnographic research that is situated within the context of an individual's cultural and social practices or everyday life allows researchers to draw connections between the subject's real world experiences and the environment being studied.

Kusenbach (2003) offers five ways in which go-alongs can add to the research process and bridge the gap between formal observation and interview, noting these research techniques can be instrumental when "important aspects of lived experience may either remain invisible, or, if they are noticed, unintelligible" (p. 459). First, go-alongs can shed important light on how a subject's *perception* is shaped by an environment. Deeper understanding of *spatial practices*, or how a subject engages in the environment, is a second outcome of go-alongs. Third, and perhaps most important for my study, go-alongs can contribute to the *biography* or life story of a subject by providing a link between the narrative story and the lived experience of the students outside the college or university setting. The fourth intended outcome, *social architecture*, allows the researcher to situate the subject in the social relationships of his home environment. Finally, Kusenbach (2003) contends, the *social realm* of a subject can be discovered through go-alongs by observing social interactions in the home environment.

The go-along conceptually represented a way for me to gain a better understanding of the contextual differences between home and institutional cultures for my participants. In other words, by viewing my participants in their natural environment, I might glean more than I could by seeing them in only the college campus environment. I had planned to conduct the go-alongs between the first and second formal interviews.

After my first round of interviews, I realized it was not feasible to meet each of the participants for a face-to-face go-along in their neighborhoods; time constraints, transportation barriers, and geographic distance became insurmountable barriers. I also perceived my Whiteness to be an obstacle as all of the randomly-selected participants

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were individuals of color. While hoping for "natural" go-alongs, or the opportunity to accompany participants on everyday excursions or outings where I could engage them in sharing perceptions or emotions, I acknowledged, as Kusenbach (2003) warns, that my presence inevitably would alter this natural or lived experience and perhaps negate the value of the go-alongs.

Rather than relinquishing the idea of walking interviews, I began to explore how to modify the go-along methodology. A few years ago, a Black male student with whom I had a trusting relationship came to me upset about a classroom discussion on "the projects." The way in which families who live in these dwellings were portrayed made him uncomfortable; he had grown up living in an inner-city housing project. Oh a whim, I asked him to show me his former home using Google maps. We zoomed in on satellite images, and he shared stories of riding his bike around the streets of the housing project. Recalling the power of this interaction and his openness to sharing his story, I consulted with a geospatial researcher who is faculty at the university where I work. I shared the premise of the go-along and inquired about the possibilities I might have to conduct *virtual* go-alongs. Following that consultation, I determined that the widely available geospatial technologies of Google Earth and Google Street View provided a cost-effective alternative (Bentley, McCutcheon, Cromley & Hanink, 2015) to the in-person go-along as introduced by Kusenbach. Virtual go-alongs provided both observation and informal conversation while allowing me to interact with participants in their home culture without the constraints of a formal interview.

Geospatial technologies, specifically geographic information systems (GIS), have been used predominantly in the geography discipline for quantitative data collection and analysis during ethnographic research. According to Kwan and Ding (2008), the use of GIS in qualitative research is a more recent phenomenon that has been slow to catch on among researchers. The earliest recorded uses of GIS in qualitative research were in participatory action research projects of the late 1990's and early 2000's (Kwan & Ding, 2008). Kwan and Ding (2008) posit that GIS and qualitative inquiry align particularly well in narrative inquiry. Geo-narrative, the name Kwan and Ding (2008) give to the methodology, "is based on extending current GIS capabilities for the analysis and interpretation of narrative materials such as oral histories, life histories and biographies" (p. 448). The geo-narrative model introduced by Kwan and Ding (2008) incorporates three distinctive steps for data analysis, including narrative analysis, time geographic visual narratives, and computer-aided qualitative data analysis. As this study was not designed as a geo-narrative study, these three distinctive elements were not incorporated into the data collection; however, components of the narrative analysis element were included in the data analysis.

Following the second formal interview, I asked each subject to take me on a virtual tour of their home. In an attempt to get participants comfortable with the methodology, we started each virtual go-along at the subject's high school. The participant, at my invitation, led the virtual go-along to other sites for us to visit – athletic venues, work locations, favorite restaurants or shops, and finally, the streets where they live. We toggled back and forth between macro views of the geographic area to street

views of neighborhoods; we explored how the participant navigated to all the points of interest – by foot or public transportation. While I was not able to observe or capture all the benefits derived from in-person go-alongs, as detailed by Kusenbach (2003), the virtual go-alongs provided me with a greater understanding of the participants' physical and social environment that represent their home culture. I did not audio record these virtual go-alongs but rather took brief notes and made mental notes that I expanded into descriptive field notes as soon as possible (Kusenbach, 2003). The virtual go-alongs allowed me a greater understanding of the cultural shift these students experienced when coming to college.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data analysis for narrative inquiry is a complex, detailed process. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a transcription service. Constant-comparative analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes. When analyzing students' stories, the process of restorying (Creswell, 2013) was employed to reorganize stories into a general framework. Holley and Colyar (2009) consider the unique role of the researcher in narrative inquiry to be selecting, shaping and presenting stories to engage a broader audience. First, narratives should be linked to a specific time and sequence of events for optimal data analysis and storytelling (Holley & Colyar, 2009), and exploring transition during the first semester of college provided the time and sequence for this study. Holley and Colyar (2009) consider focalization as a second primary consideration in narrative research, or determining and accurately portraying the points of view of the characters. My analysis includes both the re-telling of the subject's story (Chapter 4) as well as

comparison to others through exploration of common themes (Chapter 5). Plot, or the question to be answered through the storytelling, is the final consideration Holley and Colyar (2009) associate with narrative research. The plot for this study is how the participants experience transition to college as first-generation, low-income students from working class backgrounds.

As the intention of narrative inquiry is to relay an experience and depict how characters make meaning of those experiences, Mertens (2010) recommends discourse analysis, or an in-depth exploration of the way language is used, as a means of data analysis. Researchers must look for deeper meanings embedded in the answers participants give and words they choose to use. Through discourse analysis and language analysis, the researcher can ascertain "how the story is told, what identities, activities, relationships and shared meanings are created" (Mertens, 2010, p. 427). Using qualitative data analysis software, descriptors for participants were created and transcriptions from the 16 semi-structured interviews were analyzed through a coding process. Saldana (2016) refers to coding as heuristic, a process undertaken to analyze data; coding is not by itself analysis. Each interview was coded; charts and tables were generated to demonstrate relationships among participants and patterns in coding. By identifying recurrent phrases or condensing data into relevant words or phrases, coding facilitated the linking of all data collected. Eight higher-order codes and 16 lower-order codes (Appendix G) were developed. Following deeper analysis, these were collapsed into three categories: habitus, first-generation identity, and transition and biculturalism.

Trustworthiness

Recognition of the role of the researcher is most crucial in narrative inquiry since the researcher is part of the story being told. I opened this dissertation with a telling of my own story as a first-generation, low-income student from a working-class background. This research topic stems from my own experiences as a college freshmen and my personal journey toward understanding of those experiences. According to Creswell (2013), reflexivity in qualitative research requires the author to acknowledge "biases, values, and experience that he or she brings to the qualitative research study" (p. 216). Saldana (2016) offers that the level of personal involvement by the researcher – peripheral, active or complete member – dictates what filter and lens a researcher uses while analyzing data. Filters influence the types of questions asked and responses received during interview while lenses refer to the "gender, social class, and race/ethnicity of your participants – and yourself " (p. 8). While my formal interview questions address a range of issues that are reflected in a review of extant literature, they are also are born out of my own experience. I heard elements of my story, or versions thereof, repeated when speaking with participants.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be established through several means, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are recognized as reliability and validity counterparts for qualitative research.

Credibility was established in several ways, including member checks and peer debriefings, applicable to narrative inquiry (Mertens, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

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Member checks, which involve seeking verification of interview content by study participants, were important to ascertain credibility; both formal and informal methods were used for member checks. Informally, interview notes and oral summary were shared with participants; formally, verbatim transcripts were checked against audio records. Limited email exchanges occurred and allowed me to follow up with participants about their semester progress. This interaction between researcher and study participants was ongoing for the first semester.

Peer debriefing was equally important to establish credibility. A colleague who is familiar with narrative inquiry and who was a first-generation college student served as the peer debriefer. According to Mertens (2010), peer debriefing includes asking questions designed to challenge my conclusions, assumptions and analysis. The role of the peer debriefing was important due to the symbiotic relationship between storyteller and researcher and the ongoing challenge to accurately represent the study participant's point of view when using narrative inquiry.

Transferability, the parallel to external validity in positivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), allows for readers to "determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context" (Mertens, 2010, p. 259). The study presents multiple participants with rich details of time, place, context and culture. Dependability, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) liken to reliability in quantitative studies, involved formally noting and monitoring changes in analysis and interpretation of data (Mertens, 2010).

Limitations

The first limitation in this study is sample size. Collecting narratives from eight

students, while an appropriate sample for narrative methodology, provided only a glimpse into the lived experiences of first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. Additionally, sampling from liberal arts institutions in New England created a more homogenous group than a study of larger institutions in other parts of the country. New England has strong educational roots, and this may have influenced the perceptions and experiences of the study participants. Seven of the eight participants were New England residents.

Real-time data collection during the first semester of the first year of college was not sufficient length of time to observe or record cultural shifts or differences. Although research around transition to college is most often situated within the first-year, a closer examination of a cultural transition lends credence to a much more convoluted, non-linear process that spans more than the first semester. Capturing students at the beginning and end of the first semester did not allow in-depth reflection about the cultural transition. By design, I wanted to gauge the impact of the cultural transition during the first semester of college for first-generation, low-income students. I now believe this is not sufficient time to collect data around this topic. A longer data collection period could yield different narratives and lived experiences. Much as it is the cumulative effect of microaggressions on an individual, it may be that prolonged exposure to the middle class values of college has a more lasting and negative impact, which could lead to greater dissonance. Ideally, a longitudinal study could yield telling information absent from this study.

Another limitation of the study is that all participants are from urban backgrounds. The lived experiences and transition to college is very different for first-generation, low-income students from rural areas. All participants in this study attended urban high schools – some private, some charter, and some public charter. Growing up and becoming educated in an urban area could result in different exposures that could lessen or increase the impact of transition to the middle-class culture of college.

A fourth limitation emanates from recruiting students who are actively supported by access and success organizations. By design, I wanted to control for cultural capital; I did not want this study be about the acquisition of such. Rather, I hoped to examine habitus or those ways of thinking that come from being members of the working class. In reality, it is difficult to separate habitus and cultural capital into two distinct and separate characteristics or processes when, in actuality, they are overlapping, with one being instructive to the other, and it is inherently difficult to quantify or qualify culture. This limitation does not diminish the important role of access and success organizations. On the contrary, the experiences of the participants in this study are greatly enhanced by the involvement and guidance of the organization. However, results in this study may be skewed since all participants came from the same access and success organization. A comparison of experiences for those supported by access and success organizations with those who are not could produce valuable research and further inform practice.

Ironically, the most important limitation is the most significant finding -- the virtual go-along. It was not the use of the virtual go-along methodology that was problematic or a limitation; it was not anticipating in advance the power of the

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methodology. When it became clear that I could not accomplish in-person go-alongs with my participants, the use of virtual walking tours allowed me to create a sense of place with my participants. It brought life to the narratives they had openly shared with me. In my original research proposal, the go-along was not intended to be recorded or to serve as a formal interview; I expected the virtual go-along to provide informal knowledge about my participants, just as the proposed in-person go-alongs were intended to do. The virtual go-alongs were far more instructive than anticipated. When I realized the power of the virtual go-along and the way in which the methodology served to complement and strengthen a subject's narrative, it was too late to go back and make the go-along central rather than ancillary to the research. I did not audio record the virtual go-along, yet the participants were most relaxed and animated during these virtual tours. As a result, the full power of the virtual go-along is not captured in this study. The opportunities to apply the virtual go-along methodology in higher education research are significant.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES

This chapter focuses on the stories of the eight participants in my study. These

narratives were collected during fall semester of their first year of college, with three of

the participants – Jay, Anna and Mackenzie -- attending a private institution and five

participants – Michelle, Kimberlye, Karley, Fili and Neymar -- attending a public

institution. I met with the participants twice on their campuses, once at the beginning of

the semester and once at the end of the semester. The change in demeanor for each the

participants from our first to second meeting was palpable -- from unsure and tentative

during our first meeting to confident and more settled during our second meeting. This

comfort level at the second meeting reflected not only their familiarity with me as the

interviewer but also their broader transition to the role of a college student.

During the first interview, participants were asked to complete a demographic

profile (Appendix A). The two formal interviews were structured to probe how first-

generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds experience the cultural

transition to college. Interview questions were designed to address habitus, first-

generation identity, transition and biculturalism (Appendix B); follow-up questions

during the second interview were intended to provide a deeper look into how the

participants were transitioning to college (Appendix C). At each interview, I asked the

participants to give me four words or phrases that described what it means to be a first-generation college student. There were few differences between the four words or phrases at the first interview and those offered at the second interview. By asking the participants for these words or phrases, I was able to obtain a deeper understanding of how these students perceived their transition to college. Each narrative, thus, begins with the four words or phrases.

Similarly, each narrative ends with an account of the virtual go-along. We began each of these virtual tours at the participants' high school as I determined this was a non-threatening way to enter their worlds. From that starting point, the participant's own story guided our next location. For example, if they took public transportation to their school, we traveled to the train or bus stop; if they mentioned they held a job, we visited that location; and if they had a favorite restaurant or nearby shop, we visited the site. We "traveled" the streets in and around to give me an opportunity to ask questions about their neighborhoods. The last location I requested to visit was their home. Afterward, I often would give them a brief virtual tour of my hometown in the Ozarks, further allowing us to compare our experiences and disarming them so they saw me in some manner other than a researcher. The first three narratives are students at a private university, and the next five are students enrolled in a public university.

Jay

Four Words or Phrases

- *I would say it takes trial and error. The reason I say that is because when I first came here I was a typical freshman. I signed up for 12 activities, and I drove myself insane. I had to drop all of those activities and keep on.*

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- *Another thing is one of Jesuit characteristics of my high school. I feel like in order to be successful you have to be open to growth, because you have to expect change and adapt to it quickly, not quickly but you need to adapt to it at some point and you can't just go into things with a narrow mind.*

- *My mom always told me this. She always told me don't forget where you come from. What she always means by that is just because I'm at [private university] does not mean I have to portray myself to be someone I'm not. She said just remember where you come from, stay humble because if you stay humble things will continue to go well opposed to being like arrogant and snotty. She always said that whatever God gave you He can take it back whenever He wants. She always says don't forget where you come from. If you become successful, when you become successful, she tells me to remember that I need to give back to my community for people that are like me or similar to me to help them be exposed to these opportunities.*

- *I think you need to be strong willed at [private university]. You should be strong willed because students will try to get you to do things you don't want to do.*

His Story

Jay moved halfway across the country to attend a private university in the North East, and he gave all appearances of adapting quickly. He did not talk of feeling homesick, and instead, he admitted to exploring options to limit the amount of time back at home over semester breaks and summers. As Jay's story unfolded, it became obvious he always felt a bit different from those around him. He was the oldest of five children, and he quickly explained the others were half brothers and sisters. He lived with his mother and a younger half-brother and sister; two other younger half-brothers shared his biological father, with whom they lived. His mom dropped out of high school when she was a sophomore and pregnant with Jay, a factor that seemed to motivate him to perform academically.

My family is kind of different. I think we're different in our own way. I was the

only one that was really serious about school in my family. My mom was more

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like I should relax because she said I was stressing myself out about school too much. She always did her best to give me, to make sure I got the education I needed. She was just never into education as much as I was. My sister, she's a freshman now in high school. She's not too much into school, or my brothers. My younger brother, he's in kindergarten and he's enjoying school. I don't know, I try to motivate my siblings to do good in school, but it's just not their thing. They don't enjoy it too much.

Education has not always enjoyable for Jay either. Because of an October birthday, he was among the oldest in his grade, yet he admitted that he struggled from kindergarten through third grade, resulting in being "held back" in third grade. Not advancing with his classmates was a formative experience for Jay, and one that impacted his education going forward. He recalled, "that sent a message to me that I needed to get my stuff together." At his mother's insistence, he was relocated to a "better" school where he was exposed to more opportunities and, Jay recalled, he was taken seriously for the first time as a student. "It's crazy because I was so far behind and I felt like I wasn't capable of being there, so I always had that motivation to catch up with everyone else. It took me two years to catch up and eventually when I caught up, I just stuck to it," he said.

The move to a better school was accompanied by a move to live away from his mother and to the suburbs to live with his biological father. While his early elementary school was comprised largely of Black students, his new school was predominantly White and located in a middle-class neighborhood. Jay claimed he was aware of social class differences from a very early age, in part because he saw his single mother struggle

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to make ends meet and in part because the school in the suburbs was in sharp contrast to his former elementary school.

> When I moved to my dad's, because a lot of the students, they were wearing like fancy brand clothes and they would have like the latest technology and I would ask for it. My parents would just tell me no and I was like, 'Why not? All the other students, kids have it. Why can't I have it? I'm doing better in school so I deserve it.' I didn't understand that as a kid, but as I got older I started to understand things a lot more and I saw why I didn't have things the other kids were able to have.

> Jay may not have had the material things he wanted or been allowed to attend summer camp with his friends because it was "too expensive and my parents weren't making enough money to send me." Academically, though, he consistently was pushed and encouraged to do well. That first summer after repeating third grade, he recalled, was miserable.

> Oh, I had the worst summers as a kid. Okay, so since I was far behind in school, they borrowed me textbooks over the summer because I struggled with division as a kid. It took me the whole summer to learn division. Over the summer I was just doing homework that they left for me and they were like oh, this is just for you so you can catch up because you were held behind…. After third grade transition to fourth grade, I had summer school and I had homework from my parents and I had homework from school. I think sixth grade is when I finally caught up and I was all on board with everything.

Jay remembered trying to cheat his way through that first summer of long division, finding the textbook in his parents' bedroom and copying answers to the problems he was left to work. When it became clear he was not learning but cheating, his stepmother did not cut him any slack and, "after crying and being forced to do it so many times, I eventually stopped being stubborn and I was open to learning it." Jay attributed much of his drive to do well academically to his stepmom.

Although Jay did not live with his biological mother again until high school, she remained influential by pushing him academically. He said she got onboard with his education after he failed the third grade; because he took his studies seriously, she did as well. Jay said the most significant qualities his mother nurtured in him were perseverance and patience.

My mom always worked with me with perseverance. As a kid, I used to give up a lot. I used to get really frustrated when I couldn't figure things out and I would quit. She would always tell me that things don't come easily and that I have to work for them. That kind of always motivated me with school and just gave me that extra drive…. She has to tell me that patience is a virtue because I'm so impatient when it comes to things at school. I'm like no, I need to do it now.

Now, now, now! She's just no, we need to be patient and you need to calm down. Jay's mom repeatedly told him that education was the key to future success, that if he wanted things in life he needed an education. She compared him to herself, saying she was low-income in part because she didn't finish high school; she compared him to his cousins, who didn't finish high school and struggled financially.

During his freshman year of high school, Jay moved back to live with his mom.

My dad just existed. Didn't talk much. As I got older, that was a problem for me

because I always wanted a parent child relationship and I never got that from my

dad. So we argued a lot. We didn't see eye-to-eye. My freshman year of high

school it wasn't getting any better. I started talking back to him and we just

argued a lot so he just told me to leave. Then I went with my mom.

According to Jay, the public high schools near his mom's home were "not very good"

and his mother worried he wouldn't fit in there. She found a private school that was

"fairly cheap" and enrolled Jay in it. The high school, affiliated with the Jesuit faith,

served low-income youth who were predominantly African American; there were 36

students in Jay's graduating class. The school also was part of a corporate Work Study

program, meaning most of Jay's $14,000 annual tuition was paid by a corporate partner

where he, in turn, worked during the school year. "It [money from his job] went straight

to the school and it was deducted out of our tuition," Jay said. "The rest of the [tuition]

money came from outside donations to the school and then our parents paid maybe like a

small amount. It was adjusted on a scale. My mom paid $68 a month for my high school

tuition."

Nonetheless, a theme of not being as smart or academically able was a recurrent

one in Jay's educational career, resurfacing over and over again. High school brought a

similar refrain.

My sophomore year transferring to [Jesuit high school], I didn't join any

activities. The reason I didn't join any activities was because I was kind of shy

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because I came from a public high school my freshman year and I transferred into

[Jesuit high school] and I'm like ah, this is going to be a hard school. I'm not

gonna be able to keep up. I have to focus on my grades 24/7. My sophomore year

of high school, I dominated. Like, that was my best year. I received straight A's

the entire year. With progress reports, report cards, always A's. But I wasn't

happy my sophomore year of high school because I didn't make friends. I was

always focused on academics. I was like really sad my sophomore year. My

junior year I signed up for activities and I became more involved and I made

friends. I didn't want to go back to being sad, so I just got involved there.

With 100 percent college acceptance as a motto, Jay's high school fostered his academic

potential while the corporate Work Study program, as part of tuition remission, nurtured

his career aspirations. Working at a large, urban law firm, Jay grew to believe law school

was his eventual path and, accordingly, considered political science as a college major.

As part of his college choice process, Jay participated in a summer college

exploration program at another small, private university in New England.

The president of my school actually told me about [private university]. When I

went to [summer program university] last year, they took me to visit six other

schools over the summer during the [summer program university] program. I

came back to high school going I really want to go to [summer program

university]. I came to visit that school in July. It's like I want to go to [summer

program university], it's my top choice, could you help me to find scholarships.

My president of my school said 'Let's have a talk. You should apply to [private

university].' I was like no, I want to go to school in New England. I said I don't want to go there, I want to go to school in New England. We just kept going back and forth. He's like it is in New England. Do you even know what I'm talking about? I'm like no, it's in [Midwestern state]. He eventually pulled the school up on his laptop and he showed me and I was like oh, I don't know. I wanted to go far.

As Jay began to explore [private university], he was convinced he wouldn't get accepted. He had read that the school had a 33 percent acceptance rate. "I was like running away from the challenge, and I told my mom about it and she made me re-evaluate myself and I applied."

Jay didn't choose his college because of the major it offered; he chose it because it was far away from home.

I wanted to go far away because I know that college is only four years. I know that after college I'm going to go back to [Midwestern state], so I feel like this is my only time to really travel and to like gain a sense of independence. I could not say this to my mom and like get her into the help and the guidance for every little thing. I felt it was just best if I just go far because I didn't want to come home. Like I had family members that went off to college – not my siblings -- but I have family members stay like in state for college and then they would come home on the weekends and then that led into other problems. And they just end up staying and never going back so I didn't want that to be me. I'm like, if I go far away I

know I'm not going to have money to buy a plane ticket to come home, so that

way I have to break myself and like push myself and stay.

Because of this desire to go far away, Jay couldn't share much of his excitement about

[private school] with his mom, adding that he kept most of his feelings to himself

"because my mom did make applying for college difficult for me because she wanted me

to stay in-state." Jay admitted he was able to manipulate the situation to his favor.

She kept pushing me to apply to in-state school, so what I ended up dong was I

applied to a couple of in-state schools for her but I did not fill out financial aid.

She didn't find that out until the summer when I told her. I didn't apply for

financial aid for in-state schools so that way it would be like nearly impossible for

me to stay in state because she said, 'Oh, the tuition is so much cheaper! Why

would you go pay $60,000 for this school when you can go to this school for

$20,000.' I just didn't apply for financial aid at all. I just didn't want to stay so I

didn't apply for financial aid for in-state schools, but for all the out-of-state

schools, I applied for financial aid. When the financial aid packages came in, she

said, 'Oh, okay. Okay. It is best for you to leave.'

It didn't take long for the self-doubt about his college choice to start plaguing Jay.

He attended a summer transition program, leaving the Midwest in July and heading to

New England for the summer bridge program and the start of his college career.

The main reason I was afraid to attend [private university] is because I heard how

hard it was and all my teachers kept saying, 'oh you're gonna work really hard at

[private university]. You have to really work for it.' I was like what if I'm just not

able to keep up because I was looking over the admissions criteria and I'm like oh

my God, everyone is so smart. I'm just going to be like the dumb kid. I'm just

gonna struggle and no one is going to help me. I was a little intimidated because

my high school was predominantly African-American and I noticed that I was

going to be shifting back into how things were at [suburb] to being like the

minority in school. I was a little hurt emotionally but I didn't want to tell my mom

that.

Jay expected to come to college and earn a 4.0, until the summer bridge writing class.

When his first papers were returned with C's, he felt completely unprepared for college.

His fears were somewhat allayed when the professor assured him that grades were

secondary to learning the materials, a different message than the one he received in high

school. He also received an important message of validation from the summer bridge

program coordinator, after he shared his fear of not making it because things were so

hard.

> She's like, 'Oh, in the admissions office, they don't make mistakes. If they accept
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> you, that means they think that you have the talent to do the work here and to
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> keep up with everyone else.' That was kind of like motivational to me. I was like,
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> okay, they don't accept everyone so maybe they picked me for a reason. I was
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> like maybe it was a mistake, then I was like okay. Obviously they picked me for a
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> reason. So I just started working through it.

> Socially, Jay did not feel the same sense of dread. The summer bridge program

predominantly involved students of color and focused on community building within this

group. When the regular fall semester began, the sense of belonging and security Jay felt during the summer program was challenged. He spoke about microaggressions as one of the biggest obstacles he encountered. The first instance, he recalled, occurred in the bookstore where a clerk asked him if he was an international student because he was living on campus earlier than most other freshmen.

> The second time it happened was with this kid …. I'm trying to think of the exact phrase. He said, 'Oh, you're not the typical Black person.' I was like, what does that mean? He's like, 'Because you're like all calm and mellow. You're not loud and rowdy.' I'm like, so are you trying to say that all of us are loud and rowdy? That's just a stereotype. I don't know. It's just small things that people say that they're like saying out consciously and they don't know how to say it appropriately, I guess.

> Through the summer bridge program, Jay was able to connect with others like

him – students of color from low-income backgrounds who shared similar stories of growing up. When fall term started and all students moved onto campus, he was taken out of this comfort zone and hit with the reality of the majority of the student population at [private university].

> When school started it was kind of like whoa, whoa because the parents were like dropping the students off in Range Rovers and Mercedes and BMW's and like whoa, I hardly see these in [Midwestern city] where I come from. I mean, I don't let it get to me, but some of the people here are really wealthy. Really wealthy…. My mom used to always tell me to worry about myself. When I was growing up

in third grade I was worried about how the other students were doing opposed to how I was doing and that made my transition a little harder because I wasn't focused on how to improve myself. I was focused on how everyone else was doing. As I got older I started to focus more on me, so I think that's why I became so much … I became a better student in middle school because I started to focus only on me and I didn't care how everyone else's grades were. When I came here, I saw the cars and how much money people had and I was just like I don't care. It's not me. I can't ask for it, or no matter how much I want it, I'm not going to get it instantly so I just have to work for it. I just … I don't pay it any attention. I just say whatever. It's just a car.

Jay did not share this level of detail with his mother, primarily because he did not want her to worry. He tended to share academic information and, even then, on a much modified scale. They spoke of grades, food in the cafeteria, and friends he had made. In a way, Jay said, college allowed him to become more himself.

I'm more laid back at school than I am at home because I feel like at home I have an image that I have to portray around the house. I'm supposed to be like studious and very, I don't know, my sister says I'm a little stubborn. I don't know. It's like W.E.B. DuBois. Have you heard of him? It's like living a double veil because at home I'm more uptight and at school I'm more calm and mellow and outgoing.

As Jay expounded on the notion of living in two worlds and related it to the DuBois double veil concept, it was clear this was a lesson he has been learning since third grade:

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living as a Black man and living as a Black man in a White world. It was also evident his high school experience was formative to this learning process.

> I think my high school did prepare me. When I was in high school I didn't think I would be prepared for [private university]. I felt like out of the other schools I applied to, that I was most prepared for those schools other than [private university]. The reason I thought that was because, at my high school, not many kids are accepted into selective schools. Like, every year, there's only maybe like one or two that get accepted into selective institutions, so I was like oh, maybe not. No, no, no. Maybe I should have went to the other schools. I feel like [high school] prepared me most because working at a law firm. I was the only African-American…. We dealt with a bunch of wealthy attorneys, so I kind of picked up on their vibes and I just, I don't know, I just adapted.

Adaptation has been a cornerstone of Jay's educational process, and it unlikely that will change for him. Yet he often failed to see the positive aspects or strength of this quality in himself and allowed self-doubt to creep in, leaving him wondering if he is an imposter – not intelligent enough, not worthy enough, not good enough.

The Virtual Go-Along

Jay's high school, a modern and sleek three-story metal and glass structure, stood in stark contrast to the red brick multi-family homes that lined the street across from its entrance. The buildings on either side of the school, also much more traditional in design, included a large assisted living/nursing home facility and a faith-based school complex separate from his Jesuit school. The high school, while in a predominantly residential

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area, was just minutes away from a major interstate artery that runs east to west in the city.

Jay's school provided a bus to drop him and other students in the city for their Work Study jobs, and with no traffic, the nearly eight miles could go quickly. The bus dropped and picked up students off at a busy intersection just a few blocks from the building where he worked. The sleek, modern black glass high-rise structure where the law firm was housed rose 44 stories into the city's skyline. This relatively modern skyscraper stood in contrast to the more traditional, turn-of-the-century architecture of the buildings nestled around it. The entrance to the building, complete with a Starbucks on the first floor, was black marble with gold lettering. The law office where Jay worked was on the top floor of the building, and he spoke of the plush quarters. His duties often included running errands or dropping items off at nearby office buildings. As we explored the bustling business and financial district, Jay's comfort with the urban setting was apparent. He noted points of interest along the virtual tour – primarily buildings named for the companies they house. Jay told me the firm hired him independently for weekend, school break and summer employment.

As a way to get more perspective of the contrast between Jay's work and home, I asked him to show me where he lived with his dad in the suburbs, which was due west of the downtown business district filled with skyscrapers. He was reluctant to do so, claiming he was not sure of the address, and I did not push the issue. We briefly looked at wide shots of the map to get sense of the suburb's distance away from the downtown law firm. Jay shared his current address where he lived with his mother.

Jay's home was south of a major interstate artery that ran into the city; the high school was north of the interstate artery. Jay's street was lined with multi-family row houses. Narrow three-story brick structures dominated the street, many with small wrought iron fenced yards. Most dwellings were two- or three-family, as was Jay's. He, his mother and two siblings lived on the third floor of his home. The front of the home had a wrought iron staircase that rose to the second floor and an entry door for the second and third floor apartments; the first floor was accessed at street level. Jay's house was not distinguishable from the other homes on either side of it. Some homes had small front porches with stone steps and some gave the appearance of recent remodeling of the entrances. Across the street, the homes were similar in style with an empty lot directly across from Jay's home. At the end of the block, a large two-story brick structure with boarded windows and doors appeared. The wood was aged, and there was no indication of what the building originally housed. A quick travel up and down the street also showed a few more empty lots and few boarded up buildings. There were no businesses or commercial properties in the immediate vicinity of Jay's home.

Observations

The contrast between Jay's home, his school, his work in the city and [private university] were not subtle. Opened in 2008, Jay's high school had just over 300 enrolled students with about 40 percent of those students identifying as male and 60 percent as female. As Jay had shared, 97 percent of the students identified as Black and 3 percent as Hispanic; more than 80 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced lunches, with the average family income at $24,200. The high school also achieved a 100 percent

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acceptance to college for each of its graduating classes since 2012, and more than 80

percent of its alumni remained in college. The school was situated in the middle of one of

the highest crime areas of Jay's home city.

Jay was most animated when we toured the downtown area where his Work Study

job was located. As he spoke and pointed to different landmarks, I visualized him

hustling around the streets with confidence and a sense of belonging. His language

reflected knowledge and ease with the energy of the city. The private university he

attended was isolated from the energy of the downtown urban environment of his home.

He seemed to separate these two environments by the roles he assumed in each place,

further signaling his abilities to adapt to situations.

Anna

Four Words or Phrases

- *It's definitely difficult.*

- *With my parents always helping out and supporting me, it's rewarding.*

- *Definitely accomplished, because I knew how much my parents wanted me to get into college and I did.*

- *Powerful, a little, because the knowledge that you get from college, you just feel a lot more knowledgeable and powerful. You can go into an area of study that you want and then just learn things that you're interested in and apply that to jobs.*

Her Story

Anna grew up in a large urban area in what most would classify as an ethnic

neighborhood. She's lived in the same location her entire life with her mother, father and

older sister. Her father was a restaurant cook, and her mother was a lunch monitor at the

neighborhood elementary school. While her father moved jobs often, her mother had

been at the same school for more than 20 years, including when Anna attended as a student. She recalled that she liked seeing her mother every day at lunch, lending a bit to her own popularity as someone who could "hook my friends up for more food and stuff." She described her neighborhood as ethnic and homogenous. For the most part, the families were all low-income with little to no college education.

Despite the lack of formal education within the family, Anna and her sister were expected to go to college. Her parents knew first-hand the difficulty to "put yourself out there" and make a living without a college degree. Supportive was the word that Anna used over and over when speaking about her parents and the value they placed on education. Anna relayed a story that conveyed what she meant when she said supportive. Anna's sister wasn't really good in math and while her mother who had little formal education to be good in math, that didn't stop Anna's mother from trying to help her sister. Anna recalled her mom buying math texts and workbooks, staying up late into the night to teach herself math concept and equations, and then working with Anna's sister the next day to teach her the math concepts. To Anna, there was no clearer demonstration of the value placed on education than the efforts by her mom to learn something "inside out" just to make things easier for her sister. Anna recalled with a smile that calculus put an end to the tutoring by her mom, but the values of hard work and education were deeply rooted.

English was not the primary language spoken at home, and Anna had been interpreting information for her parents her entire life. They encouraged her to join lots of different college readiness programs to help with the college process, acknowledging that

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these organizations provided information they could not. Support, Anna said, came in different forms; she didn't need for her parents to provide the "college knowledge" but she did need their encouragement and constant pushing to seek that help elsewhere. Otherwise, she revealed, she would have sloughed off deadlines and paperwork. She recalled how her sister and parents would sit in the living room and discuss her sister's prospects for college, laying the foundation for Anna's own discussions around college and how to pay for it a couple of years later.

Anna's intelligence was ever-present in the language she used and in the wisdom with which she shared her story. The private university she attended was located less than 50 miles from her home in the state's second largest urban area. While not her first choice among the colleges she considered, she believed it is probably a good one for her. The classrooms were small, the teachers knew her name, and the discussions were not unlike the ones she had in high school. She graduated from a public exam school with a storied past as one of the best in the nation for college preparation, and she brought academic skills based on rigor and advanced placement courses with her to college. She felt prepared academically for college; socially, the transition to college was a bit different.

Her parents saw the school for the first time while dropping her off for freshmen move-in. The family borrowed a car, and the drive from home to the college seemed more like 500 miles than 50 miles, she reflected. For a family that "doesn't get driven around a lot" and relied on public transportation, the little more than an hour-long drive made the family nervous that Anna was going too far away for college. When they

arrived on the campus, she recalled how overwhelming everything was, especially for her mom. They had to creep up a hill to the unloading spot, and her mother feared the car brakes wouldn't withstand the stopping on a hill. There were so many people and unfamiliar faces. Yet Anna immediately felt welcomed by the host of volunteers who descended on the car and helped unload her belongings. When Anna looked out her residence hall window, she felt as if she was in the country, and the quiet of the beautiful, pristine college setting took some getting accustomed to.

Despite the warm welcome from all the volunteers on move-in day and the many activities planned for freshmen orientation, Anna didn't think she was going to fit in. Between the location, which seemed rural in comparison to her home, and the student population, nothing was familiar. Anna was immediately struck by the wealthy backgrounds many of her fellow students, noting she experienced culture shock on multiple levels. People talked, dressed, and acted differently than she was accustomed. Primarily, she experienced much more diversity in her home neighborhood and high school than at her university: "At my [high] school, the minorities are the majority and over here, it's flipped."

While her race and ethnicity had been ancillary to her upbringing, they became primary to her college experience, and she quickly sought ways to connect with "like" peers – an ethnic student group to help with her sense of belonging socially, a physics group to feed her academic curiosity, and a community service group through which to "give back." The first time Anna remembered becoming aware of her social class was at a summer science program for promising high school students from around the state held

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at an elite university, noting the experience "was pretty much the first time I compared social classes together." Her first weeks at college brought much of the same social class comparisons. Anna knew she would not be at the private university had it not been for a significant outside scholarship that bridged the gap from her financial aid package. It cost more for Anna to attend one year at the private university than her family's annual income. When considering that cost over four years, she expressed the weight and the privilege of attending a private university: "I think the type of education you're paying for is very different than maybe like a state school or university because a lot of my friends go there. The classes are a lot bigger and stuff. For 61K, I think just things are nicer. I guess maybe…yeah."

For the first five weeks of fall semester, Anna went home every weekend, a trip made easy by the University's shuttle service that operated from the campus to the city each weekend. She was dropped off at a central location and took the subway home. Each time she went back home, she was struck by the contrast of the busy city street where her family lived and the small, quiet campus. At first, she felt more comfortable at home but, as the weeks went by, she found herself liking and feeling more comfortable when at college; it just seemed "more right" in the city. Her family claimed there was something "different" about her, especially in the way she talked. When pressed to be more specific, Anna said they thought she sounded "more mature." Anna spoke a language other than English at home, but it wasn't just the words she used when talking to her parents that were different; it was her "sentence structure and everything." Anna recalled that she had

a cousin who attended a prestigious university and, at the end of four years, everyone thought she talked differently too.

Her family continued to be interested in her education after Anna went to college. They peppered her with questions about her classes, if she was doing "good" in them, if she liked her professors or not. She told them a bit about what she was learning, because "they really like listening to it." Her close friends from high school – all who attended universities in the area and three of whom were in the same college access and success program as Anna – did not really notice a difference in Anna. She found it weird that her family perceived a change but her friends did not, and she speculated the reason was they were all in college and shared similar experiences as her. Anna believed she would remain at the private university for four years, even though her first choice for a major was not offered at [private university], and she planned to switch to another science-related major that was offered at the school.

The Virtual Go-Along

We started our go along by typing in the address of the school Anna attended from seventh through twelfth grade. The sprawling school with its imposing structure of brick and limestone consumed one full city block, housing both a middle and high school. Three entrances flanked the main side of the building, each with arched green doorways surrounded by limestone façade that extended to brick encased green window. The first entrance was modest, up a few steps through a parking lot; parallel staircases on either side of double building doors flanked the center entrance dramatically; and the third entrance was two sets of wide steps interrupted by a flagstone courtyard. The school

seemed cavernous. Anna was 12 years old when she earned a coveted spot in the exam school. Each day, she traveled the two and a half miles from home to school using a combination of public transportation options, primarily city buses. She took me to the bus stop within walking distance of the school.

We then traveled to Anna's apartment building, where she grew up with her sister and parents, located on a busy main street less than a mile from one of the city's major tourist attractions. As we toggled back and forth between street view and map view, a sense of place developed for Anna's home. The four-story red brick building, anchored by a local, non-chain drugstore with green awnings on the corner, was characterized by row after row of bay windows separated by single windows to create a zig-zag effect. Similar buildings were across the street and on each side of the Anna's building. In the distance, the city's skyline with sleek, silver buildings rose. Anna's elementary school, where her mom continued to work, was just a short walk away, across the main street where her apartment was located and two blocks down a side street. The flat-roofed older white brick building seemed out of place with the pristine, red brick buildings and homes on the streets leading up to the school. Rectangular windows surrounded the bright blue doors of the main entrance, and a faded school sign hung above the door. A bright tile mosaic of a tree brought color to the otherwise monotone building, where the backside of artwork filled the windows of the classrooms. The elementary school was less than a block from the city's prestigious ballet headquarters.

In the opposite direction from the city skyline but still on the main street as the apartment, the public library where Anna tutored was our last stop in this virtual journey.

As we made our way down the main street, she pointed out restaurants that she loved or places where the family shopped. She asked me if I had ever heard of some of them; I had not. The library appeared to be a hub of activity for the community; brightly colored fliers filled the pillars at the library's entrance. Anna's enthusiasm for having tutored there was apparent.

Observations

Anna's exam school was known for its competitive entrance exams and for the high caliber of student who attended. After seeing Anna's home, it made sense that the liberal arts university where she enrolled seemed quiet. She grew up on a street that anyone who lived in the city would recognize; it was a main thoroughfare. Cars, taxis, buses, delivery trucks and city sounds were a constant. It was no wonder Anna described the 50 miles to her college as if it were a 500-mile difference for her and her family. As we traveled the streets, she talked about missing the noise of the city while at college; she also missed public transportation and the freedom it brought to go places. During our formal interview, especially the first one, Anna was reserved and a bit shy; during our virtual tour, she was animated and relaxed, especially as she talked about the restaurants she loved near her home or her tutoring job at the library.

Mackenzie

Four Words or Phrases

- *[It's a] difficult transition just trying to balance out your family and your academics because your family has different experiences. They just want to know about how you're doing too so it's a lot to take on.*

- *The academics, it's different since as first-generation. I didn't have as many opportunities and resources as other kids so I was kind of disadvantaged in that*

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way.

- *It's exciting because [parents] weren't able to go through it themselves, so the fact that they were able to raise a child who was able to accomplish this is really exciting for them. A lot of people with our background can't say that a lot … that they are able to go to an institution that's $60 grand a year because our yearly income doesn't even come to half of that.*

- *I think it's more personal. You figure it out on your own.*

Her Story

Mackenzie was the daughter of Vietnamese immigrants who arrived in America years before Mackenzie was born. Her mother worked in a nail salon, and had for as long as Mackenzie could remember, and her father was a technician, although Mackenzie did not exactly know what her father's vocation involved and reported he recently had taken a new job. While the parents had lived in this country for nearly two decades, English was not the first language spoken in the home, and Mackenzie often found herself translating for her parents.

> I try to translate some things for them so it's a little easier because Vietnamese, some things are a little different than it is in English. I try to say things a certain way so it's easier for them to understand, but usually they can speak English pretty well. It's just that their accent sometimes is hard for people to understand so I just would have to speak for them sometimes. But for the most part, they can navigate pretty well on their own.

She, her younger brother and parents had lived for the last 10 years in the same mid-sized New England city where she attended college. They had no other family in the area with most of their relatives still in Vietnam, and Mackenzie was three when she last visited the

family in Vietnam; her father had a brother who lived in a southern state, and she was in fourth grade the last time she saw these relatives. She attributed her immediate family's closeness to these circumstances and not having extended family nearby.

When asked specific questions about her family, Mackenzie often provided brief answers that circled back to some larger point she hoped to make. At times, her answers seemed to come from a script for first-generation students. For example, she talked about her dad attending community college and, rather than talking about whether he completed the community college, the trade he learned, or the type of work he performed to earn a living, she spoke instead of the differences in their college experiences and avoided specific answers:

> My family and I, we're very close so it was a little tough for me when I had to go off to college because since my dad, he did not live on campus. He was a commuter and so he really didn't get the experience of living on campus so he wasn't really able to understand what I'm going through. It was a little tough, the transition for me.

This closeness of her family was a recurrent theme for Mackenzie, and even though the family was only a few minutes away, she missed them terribly and went home as often as possible during the first weeks of the semester. Mackenzie attributed her values of honesty and integrity to her parents, who encouraged her to do "what's right" by putting things into perspective and not acting impulsively; health and good self-care ranked among other values she credited her Buddhist mother and Catholic father with instilling in her.

Mackenzie's geographic world was relatively small. She attended both elementary and secondary school within a few blocks of her family's apartment home. In secondary school, she was a dual enrollment student in two universities, one that was within a few blocks of her home. The neighborhood, she recalled, was filled with other immigrant families with similar stories as her own and similar approaches to parenting: "Well, like whenever our parents would scold us and all that stuff, they would go and rant and then we could talk to our friends. It was just really funny how we could relate over stuff like that." It was only recently that the family moved a few miles from the old neighborhood and into a duplex; the new home was within walking distance of the private university Mackenzie attended.

Living and going to school in small geographic area also isolated Mackenzie from experiencing social class differences. It wasn't until she was a senior in high school that she became aware:

> Social class, I mean I never really put a lot of thought into it when I was younger and it never really hit me until I guess senior year, like financial aid and all that stuff. Because money was more of a thing that my parents would worry about and not something I would worry about… I never really worked because they wanted me to focus on my education and all that stuff and it worked well. Once financial aid time care around, I really saw that some schools were really expensive and I couldn't afford to go there and all that. I needed scholarships, and so I guess that's really when it hit.

Mackenzie's lack of awareness of her social class stemmed in part, she recalled, from the focus her parents placed on education. She was quick to say they were not like the "typical Asian parents where they're like super stressful," and she added "thankfully." They did encourage academics by giving her practice math problems and by buying books when she was younger, laying a foundation for her to excel in high school.

Mackenzie's secondary school, with just over 200 students in grades seven to 12, was opened 20 years ago as an alternative public education opportunity for high achieving students living in her low-income, high-crime neighborhood. Her school was a joint partnership with a nearby highly selective university. On several occasions, she spoke of the school's small size and its lack of resources or AP credit courses. However, dual enrollment was a significant and integral part of her high school curriculum. Mackenzie completed four dual enrollment courses (history, economics, psychology and biology) through the two private universities near her home, including the one she chose to attend and the one that had been in partnership with her secondary school. When asked if her parents encouraged dual enrollment, she said they really didn't understand the concept. They knew she was going to the universities' campuses for classes, and while they may not have understood the importance of obtaining dual enrollment credit, her parents were "really proud" of her and that alone made her happy.

Mackenzie's decision about which university to attend came down to money and proximity to home; the school that offered the most money that was near home was where she chose to attend. She simply did not "want to put my parents under that

pressure of having to pay for all that." Most of her graduating class went on to college, and most participated in some form of college access and readiness programming. She was very close to saying yes to a private school in another state where she had been offered admission, and the financial package the school offered was good. However, she reflected, she couldn't go so far away from her family. "I was trying to balance it out. What's worse, putting them through the financial reasons or the personal and they are like, 'We don't care about money'."

To have the option to attend a selective university was not lost on Mackenzie, and she recognized the contrast between her secondary school and college.

> Our high school has a high graduation rate but for the area overall … it's very crime ridden and a lot of people drop out. They join gangs and all that stuff. They get involved in stuff that isn't really good for them and so it's like coming from that kind of area, because I've lived there for a while before I moved to the home where I am now, so just seeing that compared to how it is here and where they came from, it's a big contrast.

Before classes started, she moved onto campus early and participated in a week-long orientation program for students of color who were also first-generation, low-income. She reflected on that experience and attributed the week's activities to helping her connect and find friends who were "similar to me." This group of about 20 students formed a foundation for her to build upon – a group to eat with, hang out with and relate to.

Academically, Mackenzie felt disadvantaged and less prepared despite the four dual enrollment courses to her credit. She articulated this by saying she was allowed to shine and be the top achiever at her high school. The high school curriculum was not competitive, except for the dual enrollment courses, and many of her peers didn't really try the same way she did. She grew accustomed to having small classes in high school with personal involvement, or "hand holding," by teachers. In college, she was no longer the smartest or most driven, and she was surrounded by students who went to better high schools with better academics. All this left her feeling like "you're on your own a little bit more." At times, she recalled, "I'm just so lost in class. I'm like, what are they even talking about?"

Having settled into the routine of her classes and learned to seek help from professors and tutors by the end of the semester, Mackenzie wished she had felt comfortable sooner. She continued to find ways to connect with the many opportunities available to her. From serving on her residence hall inter-council to playing rugby to attending campus events, she started to remain on campus rather than head home as often on weekends. She even expanded her friend group based on "personalities and liking the same things" rather than predominantly socializing with those who came from the same socio-economic background. She talked about a concept she learned in a sociology class that gave a name to her feelings – cultural capital.

> I feel like they've definitely had an advantage academically because their families were able to afford tutors and all that stuff. And since they were able to go to better schools, they had better resources and so they were just a lot more prepared

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academically than I was. And the cultural capital they have, they have certain

resources that they know of that I don't. I just feel like they know things that I

don't and so it's tough.

She went on to give an example of the difference cultural capital provided her peers:

I'm not sure but it just reminded me of this article I read about child-rearing

where children with higher educated parents, they were more likely to ask for

things, so ask for extensions and all that stuff... they had a sense of entitlement

where they were more likely to ask for things, whereas I was a little more

hesitant, you know? Yeah, because I didn't really have that sense of entitlement

and so not knowing that.

Mackenzie acknowledged she was changing, even after just a few weeks of

college. She felt much more independent. "I refer to my dorm as my home now. It's kind

of weird. I feel like I'm betraying my house when I'm going home." She had started to

feel a bit like an outsider when she went to her family home. In part, she stopped

spending as much time in day-to-day conversations with her family, and this left her out

of the loop.

It's just weird because I've gotten used to living here. [College] is my home now

and that's just like my old home. It's kind of weird. I was talking to my friends.

We were like, Oh, high school? That's like our old life now. When you go back to

revisit, you see all these kids and all that stuff. It's so different.

Conversely, her parents could not conceive of the things she was experiencing, although

they asked questions and Mackenzie tried to bring them into her new world. She spent

much of her time elaborating and explaining things to them that they didn't understand, and she tried not to get annoyed in doing so. "I mean, for my parents, I try to not do that because I feel really bad. So, I mean, I know they do so much for me and they try to really talk things out…. It gets annoying sometimes." Her ultimate response was to reassure her parents and "try to make them happy."

As for her friends at home, they saw a difference in Mackenzie, and some accused [private university] of changing her. "I guess it's because [private university] has that image of preppy and snobby people," Mackenzie says. "They say the way I dress has changed. The way I compose myself and all that but I don't really feel like I've changed that much." The one area where she admitted change was in her choice of a career and major. Since middle school, Mackenzie wanted to be a dentist. She quickly realized that dental school was highly competitive and she had many more career options available to her; she committed to keeping an open mind about career choice.

Mackenzie liked who she was becoming in college; she talked of having more confidence and "starting to really grasp it now." Her college environment was very competitive, she said, and people really strove to do well. Instead of becoming stressed out because of this, she relished being around people with similar motivation and goals, people who "really want to just improve themselves." She returned to that phrase from her sociology class, cultural capital. "I guess, the knowledge you are supposed to have – cultural capital and everything you're supposed to have…I was trying to get it. Really, I had some but I'm starting to really grasp it now."

The Virtual Go-Along

Mackenzie's high school was our first stop in our virtual tour. The two-story red brick building with third-floor dormers was constructed in 1885 as indicated by a concrete banner in the building's façade. By urban high school standards, it was small. It was situated on a triangular paved lot surrounded by a short, chain-linked fence. It would be possible to drive or walk past the building and not realize it was a school. The building was in excellent repair with gleaming new windows and nearly identical entries with green double doors on the front and back of the building. An American flag flew from the flagpole that rose out of the cracked concrete yard near the front-facing fence. A look around the neighborhood showed the school was surrounded by three-story, multi-family homes, one after the other distinguished primarily by paint color. A more traditional public elementary school was located about a block away from the high school.

Mackenzie took me next to the home she lived in for nearly 10 years and while attending high school. The landscape was markedly different with a mix of single family and multi-family homes on the street. There were open lots with abandoned property and the area had a more run-down appearance overall. Mackenzie pointed out the condition of the neighborhood, and at one point she claimed, "Isn't this sketchy, LaDonna?" A train track ran behind the row of homes across from Mackenzie's, and she indicated where homeless people shelter and the lots where it was common to find used needles and empty liquor bottles. She spoke freely with me about not feeling safe after dark and which nearby streets she always avoided when walking.

She was excited to share the new place where her family had moved. The duplex was on a road that presented a mix of commercial properties, industrial facilities, churches, community halls, and single and multi-family units. Her home was surrounded on both sides by wooded lots that separated them from the nearby industrial properties. Two churches sat side-by-side on the opposite side of the road. Her home had a driveway, something Mackenzie noted, and the home had a porch on the ground level. Unlike her other neighborhood, there were many surrounding properties with lawns. We zoomed out, and Mackenzie showed me how close the new home was to her college – less than a mile to the back entrance of her university.

Observations

Mackenzie's secondary school was a well-acclaimed success story in her city's public school system. As a collaborative venture with a local university, the school boasted a 95 percent graduation rate on average; in 2014, the school had a 100 percent graduation rate, something nearly unprecedented in high poverty areas. More than 80 percent of the students at the school qualified for free or reduced lunches, and more than 70 percent came from homes where English was the second language. The pristine college campus was in sharp contrast to most of the landscape from Mackenzie's upbringing, despite the five-mile radius that encompassed her two worlds.

When we traveled to the home where Mackenzie lived for 10 years, she did not hesitate to share how poor and economically disadvantaged the neighborhood was overall. She indicated where friends lived, and she noted the many ethnicities that lived in the area. She was not shy and spoke frankly about her time in this neighborhood, and I

asked her if she felt as if the private university was another world despite its close proximity. She told me her dual enrollment at another private university was even closer to her former residence so she was "used to making the switch." By the time we got to the duplex where she had moved, she was excited. It seemed like a significant move "up" for the family, as evidenced by her gleeful claim that they had their own washer and dryer in their new home. Mackenzie was energetic, and each of our meetings occurred in between other activities she was rushing from or hurrying to.

Michelle

Four Words or Phrases

- *A lot of self-evaluation. It's your choice whether you accept to be the first one [to go to college] or it doesn't seem like your choice. It's hard to put it in solid words because I feel like I wouldn't even know now. If someone's going to ask me who I am, first-generation student is not going to be the first thing. I'm just automatically called that because even in high school, we were automatically called first-generation students having an open mind to what that means because it's a choice to either go to [college] or not.*

- *I don't want to sound cliché, but it does take a lot of perseverance.*

- *Financial understanding. You have to humble yourself a lot.*

- *I think everyone knows when you're a college student, you're going to be on your own, but it's different to be the first one that's on your own…. I consider myself to be a loner, independent or having a lot of distance from other people. I actually feel happy being on my own because, I don't know, it's what I want. I wanted to get away. I wanted to have a sense of myself. I wanted to wake up and say, 'Okay, I can do this if I want or I can't do this if I want.'*

Her Story

Michelle entered our conversation with apparent reservation. To my questions, she gave very short yes or no answers when most were not yes or no questions, and she provided little detail. When asked to describe her family, for example, she responded, "I

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just say I have a mother." After being probed a bit further, I began to understand why my questions were privileged and, admittedly, why Michelle would not feel they were related to her experience. I acknowledged this to Michelle, and she opened up differently.

> Well it's hard to determine what my family is because I haven't lived with my mom all my life. She was a foster child, so when I was younger, I lived with her foster mother. So it was hard to consider who I grew up with as family or what the blood connection is as family. I just think of my mom when I think of family, but I have cousins, aunts, uncles and those from foster care. I consider them family. I wouldn't say, if someone says, 'Is that your foster cousin?' I would say, 'That's my cousin.'

This description of family embodied the complexity of Michelle's world, where seemingly straightforward situations were not so straightforward.

Michelle's family was big, and gatherings were complete with a lot of catching up and recapping. Several of her extended family members were her age, making it tough to carve out time with so many school and other responsibilities. The family size also complicated keeping in regular contact. "I have a time that if I call one aunt, I just go through the whole list of calling all my aunts and everyone else." She said members of the family -- especially her aunts -- compared notes and, if one had heard from her but another had not, Michelle paid a price. Because so many of her cousins were the same age, they remained in constant contact via social media and texting. Despite this appearance of a close family, Michelle struggled on a deeper level with defining what family truly meant for her.

Because I consider them family because of just being around them, but the

emotional part is not really there, I don't think. I feel like for someone who has an

immediate family or someone who knows their family, knows every single part of

their family on an emotional level, they could answer that question, but it's hard

because [pause]…. I can say I love my aunt, but there hasn't been a day where

we've actually sat down, connected and talked about stuff, about issues, the basics

of what an aunt-niece relationship would be.

There was one aunt she felt a stronger connection to, but even that relationship had its

limitations. The aunt was a foster child in the same home with Michelle's mom. Since the

aunt and Michelle's mom were pregnant at the same time, Michelle's cousin from that

aunt often seemed more like a sibling than a cousin, perhaps in part because Michelle

lived with her aunt and cousin for about a year. Nonetheless, this too left Michelle

conflicted.

I feel like that we can have that connection, but it's still different because I would

like to look more into, like you said, the values or things that are more serious. I

wouldn't really go to her or my mom because I'm not really sure that I would get

the response that I want or if I would feel comfortable opening up with her when I

should open up to my mom. I don't know how to balance out who to talk to.

Undoubtedly Michelle had sorted through some of the complexity as she identified an

important belief that had been imparted from her family.

I think one thing that I can learn from all of them is about being a strong woman

because there's a lot of women in my family. We have males, but they're the

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younger ones, the boys. They have a really large sisterhood. For me, it taught me that you don't need a sister in order to feel close with other females. I don't have a sister, but I can consider one of my friends a sister because I see them, even if they're not blood, but they have such a close connection …. For example, if I walk in, if it's a family event, if it's Thanksgiving and I see all the women in the kitchen, it's like Wow! I can look at that like, Wow! When the women are together, it's better.

Michelle, while hesitant at first, filled in the story of her foster family. When Michelle was three, she was removed from her mother's custody because of her mother's drug addiction. She was placed into foster care with the same woman who had fostered Michelle's mother – a woman Michelle already called grandmother. She lived with her foster family for nearly 10 years, with only intermittent contact with her mother. "I knew her, I knew of her, I talked to her on the phone, so on and so on, but I didn't really have a relationship." After Michelle's mother got clean, Michelle was returned to her full custody when she was in high school.

A lot of my friends, they envy me and my mother's relationship because when I moved in, I was really mature. She doesn't have that much dominance, or I don't think so. I don't necessarily need that either. I'm not a bad kid, but we have a relationship where it's really like, okay [pause]. I know what is wrong and what's not wrong that I would never cause her any trouble and she would never feel like she would need to be too didactic or too overbearing.

Returning to live with her mother happened at an important time for Michelle as she increasingly felt constrained by her grandmother's rules and strictness. Her grandmother ran a daycare, so Michelle recalled the days were highly structured. "With my grandmother, like I said, she was really religious. My day would be go to school, come home, help with the daycare then church later. My first time trick or treating was when I was 14. I never had that childhood aspect. It's always church, school, church, school. My life was just like a fine line."

When a charter public middle school opened in the neighborhood, her grandmother chose to fill out the application and Michelle won a spot through a lottery. She was convinced her grandmother pushed for the charter school because "they had uniforms, they were strict, they had the merit system." Michelle remained at the charter school through ninth grade, which coincided with the move to live with her mom. At that point, Michelle's mom gave her the option to remain at the charter school or attend another public charter high school; Michelle chose the latter. Messaging around college attendance began as early as sixth grade in the charter middle school and continued well into the move to the new charter high school.

> We had a lot of college field trips, especially in the sixth grade…. I think just liked seeing a lot of people on campus. We had visited while there were still classes and there was a class change. Just seeing all those people, I was like, 'Wow, there's a lot of people here. I would love to live here.' Looking back now, I'm pretty sure they were trying to feed it into us like, 'College is good. Go to college. Yeah.' It worked. It seemed like something that being somewhere else

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because I really like school, being somewhere else to learn when you can live there? Just like that they showed college as … that made me want to go even more.

Although the new high school was no less competitive and college messaging was no less pervasive, switching schools provided Michelle the autonomy she was seeking. "I wanted to be myself. I went to a middle school where it was – basically it was more strict than high school. I just never had time to be myself."

College was continually positioned as a "door to opportunity" for Michelle, and she was motivated by the thought of "getting out."

I've been so concealed into [city] or the home that I was in, the church that I was in, the school that I was in. Even when I was young, I just wanted to get out. I was so tired of just being. On top of that, feeling so alone. It's just like, 'I want to leave. I want to do something else. I want to see new things so that maybe I won't feel like my life is so miserable….In college, that's what it seemed like. It seemed like the door to opportunity. As much as people say high school is, it wasn't to me. I just feel like just going somewhere else to be someone else, it was something that I wanted to do or just going somewhere else to be myself, I might seem different. I just wanted to see how different it would be going there.

Money, more specifically earning money, became a secondary motivation for attending college. Again, the communication to Michelle was consistent and pervasive: get a college degree and earn more money. Michelle asserted that, while the message was always about getting a better paying job with a college degree, the message was never

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"that college is more money." This harsh realization – that college and opportunity cost money – was one of the most significant betrayals of Michelle's college process.

> It was like we're just feeding in. 'You have so many opportunities, you can go wherever you want.' That's what I was based upon. I never thought, okay, when it comes down to it, I'm not going to have money. I always thought in the back of my mind, 'How am I going to pay for this?' I still have time. I've got time to save money. I have time to do all this and that, but it wasn't until senior year when we decided where our deposits were going…. I would tell my mom little things about college because she doesn't know. She doesn't really understand. It was basically me getting in that information, trying to funnel it into something that she will understand, but it was just as simple as [public university] needed $500 on May 1, and I had $83 in my bank account. What am I going to do? It was at that point, I was like, wow, how am I going to do this? When I get my financial aid or when I get everything from there, how is that going to work if I have to worry about this $500 that has to go somewhere in two weeks? That's when I really just said, Wow.

Figuring out how to pay a deposit to [public university] occurred at the same time as Michelle was processing that attending her dream school – a small, private university – was not a feasible option. Even after a generous financial aid award, she would have faced significant costs and sizable loans at the private university.

> After realizing that I couldn't go to the school that I wanted to, I felt that all that stuff they were feeding in about 'You can go anywhere you want' and everything

… it hurt, actually…. It was just last minute because finding out how much it would be to go to the school that everyone's told me I can go to, everyone told me I'd be accepted to, that I would love, that I visited in ninth grade, and that I can't go there because I don't have money. That's when it hit me that everything that they told me about everything that I wanted to do, the dreams, all stuff like that, I didn't believe it.

Unlike classmates she knew in high school, she didn't have parents or relatives to guide her. She said her mom trusted Michelle's assessment of college and signed any paper Michelle put in front of her to sign. She received the same unconditional support from her extended family, and all encouraged her and believed she'd have no problem getting into college. "I think that's another attribute for my family. Seeing all my hard work, they just assume that I can go anywhere I want when, in reality, it's still the money that is the issue." Despite the overall heartache and betrayal, Michelle was thankful to have had the guidance and support of the college access and success organization during the college application process. Even through her disappointment, she was guided to a more affordable college option rather than abandoning the idea of college altogether.

Yet the issue of money has continued to challenge Michelle during her first semester of college. As she attended class or completed assignments, she felt as if she was paying money for something she did not want to do, especially since [public university] was not her first choice. Michelle was conflicted by these emotions, noting that school was something she had always enjoyed, looked forward to, and performed well in. College, on the other hand, seemed generic with the coursework irrelevant to her

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career goals of becoming a chef and owning her own restaurant. "My first initial thought is I can't really enjoy it because I know, deep down, it's not what I want to do or what I plan on doing."

The overarching belief that [public university] was not her first choice tainted most other interactions for Michelle – she admitted to enjoying the learning and followed that with conflicting statements about belonging in college.

> I don't know. Like I said to you, if I belong somewhere, even when I was younger or in general, I would just tell myself that I do because there are people around that seem like they're similar to me. I know in college, there's tons of different people here. I know I belong because everyone is different. Even in middle school and high school, I didn't really want to belong because I don't want to identify myself as anything that's normal. I don't want to have an identification or a category or anything. I feel like once I'm exposed to something new, maybe I might change or if I see something that ... if I learn something maybe I might change, so I don't want to say I belong here because, one, I didn't want to come here, I didn't plan on coming here.

Michelle was cautious about sharing her inner conflict about whether to stay or leave [public university] broadly with others. When she did share, she mostly got responses she considered unhelpful: you get good grades, you can do this.

Yet time and time again, money and opportunity become the non sequitur for Michelle. On some deep level, Michelle continued to hope that college would reset her social class and the barriers she faced around college choice.

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Well, before college -- before I started college -- I would consider myself as lower class. But after starting college and realizing what it means -- everything, like that money and everything -- I would consider myself as poor. If I'm in college, I feel like my social class would be looked at different because of the way I carry myself. But if I'm walking down the street and someone were to assume, I don't know. It's different how I feel in a certain place. Here, I don't feel like I have a social class, but I come from [city], if I'm in [city], I'll be like, 'Okay, I'm lower class or I'm poor.' That will be my automatic thought. But now that I'm in college, I feel like it's starting over. Even though I don't have money, I feel like, socially, I'm nowhere now until I get there to where I'm going…. But still at the back of my mind, I know what I would be considered if I was to be asked that question.

As Michelle continued to speak of her transition to college, it was evident she struggled to know whether she belonged at [public university]. She acknowledged that she wanted to be open to new people and experiences and that being "social" or meeting new people was not that difficult for her.

I don't find that hard, I just find it uncomfortable because there's a difference between who I want to represent myself in high school. I wouldn't like, everything that we've talked about me being myself, that's what I want to live by. I want to be more open, but it's harder to be more open to people you don't know. In high school, you can be open, but it's not the same. You can't really be open in college. I don't think you can be yourself anywhere, so it's hard to find people

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who I relate with because myself is more closed…What are you going to say? I feel like where I may find things similar or where I may feel like I'm relating to, it's not genuine because I'm trying to be, 'Oh yeah, I'm open.' I'm trying to be happy and optimistic and everything. I feel like it's harder to find who I really relate to rather than who I find stuff in common with.

Michelle did not consider home as a retreat from this discomfort. When she went home during the first weeks, it was for a specific purpose – to have a form signed and the like. Overall, it was hard to discern how much of Michelle's angst was attributed to [public university] not being her first choice and how much was attributed to more typical transition issues for freshmen students. Yet she remained determined to find her place.

Anywhere I've been, I always had the idea of 'I need to do what I have to do to get out of here.' Living with my grandmother, even though it wasn't my actions, I thought like I had to do whatever I had to do in order to live with my mom. Then in high school, I had to do what I had to do to graduate. Now, not wanting to be here is making me want to do even more. I know I don't want to be here, okay. I have to get over it just to get ahead. Even if it's not graduating here or getting my associate's here, just to get to the next level of what I'm going to do. Having that dream being taken away or like on hold, that's what's making me more determined and giving me more perseverance.

Throughout the first semester of college, Michelle continued to think about transferring from [public university]. She's sought advice from former high school teachers and her access and success organization counselor. It was a culmination of many

things that continued to preclude her from settling in to the university. Admittedly, seeing friends' postings on social media supported her doubt about college. At first, she said, everyone was posting fun pictures and everything was great. Eventually those postings turned.

> You can see with my friends who live on Snapchat and social media, beginning of the year, they're posting pictures of college and fun and everything. Then, after a while, everyone wants to go home, everyone hates college…. I think for me, it was just the small frustrations were piling on. I did expect things to be different. For grading, in high school, we'd have something to check your grade on…. In college, it's not like that. You have to really depend on everything you have graded, so I don't know what my grades are right now. I think I'm doing well, but I don't want to get my grades, and it's terrible. Sleep. Lack of sleep. It's just making everything less enjoyable for me. I like school. The stress of everything, and everything coming so close…. You have to do them right, because it's make or break.

It's hard to get past the betrayal Michelle expressed about the college access process -- she participated in all the right organizations, earned good grades, explored all college options from as early as middle school. Yet she found herself at a school that was not her first choice because, despite what she'd been led to believe; college and opportunity were not just about doing the right things.

The Virtual Go-Along

Our virtual tour started at Michelle's high school in the heart of an urban area.

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Rather than a full campus, the school occupied a white limestone, multi-story building on the edge of an urban university's campus. Michelle aptly described her high school: "It's a box!" The building faced a major thoroughfare with a subway train dividing the street. The area was congested with many cars and constant foot traffic. The school building housed grades 11 and 12, with grades nine and 10 located about a mile west of this location. The university that provided space for Michelle's high school was located on each side of the major thoroughfare, with residence halls and restaurants on one side and academic buildings on the other.

Michelle's school was positioned in a highly academic area of the city. Several small private and specialty colleges were within a one-mile radius as were large medical complexes and hospitals. It was easy to feel the energy of the area even through the computer screen. Michelle talked about how small her high school was – not even 100 in her graduating class. She also shared that the opportunity to play on a women's basketball team was a draw to this high school. I asked where the team practiced and played since this high school building appeared to have no sport facilities and most likely would not have had access to the college's facilities. Michelle took me to the venues where she practiced and played – a local YMCA and a community center. The YMCA where the team practiced was just a few blocks away from the school on the same major thoroughfare. The community center where games were played was more than a mile away on a street lined with affordable or low-income housing units that ran at a diagonal behind the university and high school. The community center was a large light brick,

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three-story structure that covered nearly a block. Michelle recalled the team was transported to the community center by bus on game days.

When taking a birds eye view of Michelle's home, the area from her home to school to the community center formed a small triangle. Michelle lived with her mother and some extended family in a single-family affordable housing unit just a little more than a mile west of the high school. A short block off the main thoroughfare, her home was located on a small residential street that backed up to a large medical center. The adjoining wooden structures, all resembling one another with an array of paint colors, neatly lined the street with speed bumps intended to slow moving traffic. Michelle said her grandmother's home was not far away in the same area of the city; she did not offer to show me the home where she lived for the early years of her life. Michelle became most animated when talking about basketball and sharing the sporting venues for practice and games.

Observations

Michelle's high school was opened as a pilot project between the public school system, a community organization and the university that offered it housing. Labeled as a college preparatory vocational high school, more than 90 percent of the student population was either African American or Hispanic; more than 75 percent of the school population qualified for free or reduced lunch. Nonetheless, the four-year graduation rate was 97 percent with 73 percent of graduates admitted to four-year colleges or universities. At the beginning of our first meeting, Michelle was cautious, almost weary of me. After I set aside my questions about family, we were able to establish rapport.

When she spoke of the betrayal she felt by doing all the right things and not being able to attend her first college choice, I fought tears, which I'm sure she noticed. The myth of meritocracy replayed in my mind as her story unfolded. At the end of the first interview when we were saying our good-byes and going over the next time I would see her, she hesitated before walking away. She said she felt like she needed to hug me, and she thanked me for listening to her story. I, in turn, thanked her for sharing so honestly with me.

Kimberlye

Four Words or Phrases

- *It's a lot of pressure and expectation. You feel like everyone is waiting whether you fail or succeed.*

- *You have to set examples for others that if they go to college ... do good so your brothers can do good.*

- *There's something I realized ... I do want to go to college, but it feels more like I'm doing it because, not that I don't want to do it, I'm doing it for myself, but it feels more like for them when I think about it. It's like so weird.*

- *I feel proud of myself after I achieve something. Yes, when I get to college, I was happy. I feel proud of myself. I guess I'm going to feel proud after I see my grades for the first semester.*

Her Story

Kimberlye spent the first 13 years of her life in Haiti, where her grandmother raised her. Her biological mother left when she was six months old, and she had an intermittent relationship with her. Her father lived in Haiti until Kimberlye was six years old when he left to move to the United States; she joined him seven years later following the earthquake that nearly devastated her country. Her father married after moving to this

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country and he and his wife had a son, Kimberlye's half-brother. Her grandmother in Haiti was also raising another of her father's sons, a younger half-brother. Kimberlye and her younger brother both moved from Haiti to join their father, stepmom and half-brother in the States. When she first moved to the U.S., she lived for a few weeks in another mid-Atlantic state with her father's sister before joining her father in time to start middle school.

The move to her father's home in New England was not a smooth one. Her father had taken a job in Canada so Kimberlye was living with her stepmother.

> I wasn't doing what she wanted me to do because everyone has their own thing. I just wasn't what she wanted me to be. She wanted a daughter because she doesn't have one. She wanted to do stuff that mothers and daughters do. I wasn't raised with my mom so I always do my own stuff. So the relationship wasn't good. I told my dad, then my dad told me "Well, you should go live with your aunt in [mid-Atlantic state].

Kimberlye moved back to a Mid-Atlantic to start middle school. She was in seventh grade when the earthquake hit Haiti, and she did not get to complete her seventh grade year. Her aunt, a strong advocate of education, wanted Kimberlye to re-enter seventh grade, but Kimberlye saw that as a setback and refused. "I had a goal. I was like, I'm graduating at 18 so I was like, no, I'm just going straight to eighth grade even though I didn't speak the language. I did not know one word. So I went straight to eighth grade. It was hard."

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Kimberlye experienced steady progress in her language acquisition through middle school and into her sophomore year of high school, earning fewer C's and gaining academic confidence with each passing year. Her father returned from Canada when she was 16, so she moved back to New England at the start of her junior year of high school; she recalled how she really wanted to live with her father. She continued to excel in school, earning A's and B's, yet the situation with the stepmother was not better.

> She wanted to kick me out of the house. She was like, "You never participate in anything in school. You just go sleep all day. I don't know how you're going to go to college. You say you want to graduate, you're going to college, but you're not doing anything." She wanted to kick me out, but my dad was like, no. So we got out of the house.

Kimberlye, her brother and her grandfather, who was also living with the family, moved to another apartment. She said things were not bad during her senior year of high school, and quickly qualified that statement with, "Well, there's always another problem, but it's nothing major. It's family so it's not that bad."

> Kimberlye always wanted to go to college. It was not something her parents talked to her about or wanted her to do; it was something she wanted to do for herself.

> Well, my dad didn't finish school and my mom never really went to school. I see how they're struggling even without a diploma. They're still struggling. I'm like I want to do something for my dad. I want to go to school. I want to try my best. I want to make him proud because he's struggled a lot to pay for me to go to

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school. It was like, okay, I have to try my best in order for me to pay him back later because my dad try really hard.

Other than an abstract goal of going to college, Kimberlye had done nothing concrete to realize that dream as she entered her senior year. She recalled that the people she met in the wealthy, mostly White neighborhood her aunt lived in had "their stuff figured out when college was nearing." She began freaking out with worry about passing the SAT.

Hard work was not something Kimberlye shied away from. She was admittedly quiet but that did not mean she was without direction. "I observe my environment. I've seen how my dad is doing, how things are. I try my best so I can do something bigger tomorrow. I know I need education in order to do that." After spending time with Kimberlye, it was apparent that she associated good outcomes with hard work, and comparison to others was often a motivator. "It feels like my friends were always the one who has everything. Although they were doing better than my family, I can see that. I know there were some that wasn't, but I look more to the one that the family's doing better, for some weird reason."

As for social class, Kimberlye again reverted to comparisons. In her neighborhood, there were those who did better and those who did worse, leaving her to claim her family was in the middle. She provided the example of food, noting that her family ate every day and did not go hungry. There were others, however, who did not eat, who had to wait, and who asked neighbors for food. She recognized that her social class in this country was lower than it was in Haiti. "The big difference here is that we are in the lowest. Still, it's not that bad, but it's different." In Haiti, her family was in a different

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social position, relative to the overall poverty in the country. They owned a home and land, so they did not have to pay rent; she attended private schools because they were better.

The comparison to others had been a force in Kimberlye's educational endeavors as well. She said she was self-taught in a lot of ways. No one helped her with school, and she was often told to figure it out on her own. "I was the one who made sure that I have good grades. I have that because I want to go get higher education. It wasn't really what others wanted." The exception came after she moved to this country and was under the influence of the aunt she lived with through middle and early high school.

In Haiti, no one was really paying attention to my school, but when I was living at the aunt's in [mid-Atlantic state], she did something I didn't like, but later one when I'm living with my dad, I kind of miss. She was comparing. She was like, "Oh, this one got a 100 on her grades. How come you didn't get 100? You have to get 100. My friend's daughter is playing soccer. How come you're not playing soccer? You need to do that.

This comparison to others continued as Kimberlye began to discuss college with her family. No one suggested she go to college although they listened when she initiated the conversation.

My dad? If I didn't want to go, then I don't have to go. They're not pushing me to go to college. It was my choice, but when they do talk about it, it was like, "You know where you came from so you have to work hard." All the pressure, but they're not helping you do it. It's like they're telling you because they saw other

people doing it, then you have to do it. But it wasn't something that's talked,

really, really talked about.

Kimberlye believed she had her family's conditional support to attend college, as long as she understood that getting a job to make money was the ultimate goal, not liking your job or profession.

This belief in job over passion left Kimberlye conflicted because she believed she would be miserable taking a job she did not like. Yet without knowledge of what was possible in college, or without guidance from others, Kimberlye entered college with no major declared, and she found this frustrating. "I did not want to be undecided. I like having a plan and just go for it. Not even wasting time, playing around, just go for it. It's still kind of hard to say, okay, you're taking these classes, but you don't really know what you're going to do." The belief she had in herself was countered by the messages she received and continued to receive from family about whether she had what it took to be successful in school. She again described herself as an observer, leaving others to doubt her motivation to succeed in college.

 I'm not out there so they don't think I'm looking for opportunity… there's other

things you do. You don't have to be out there in order for you to find opportunity

or can do. Not everybody wants to know, you don't want people to know your

business. So they think that's what I was doing just because I wasn't out there

then I wouldn't make it, or go to college. I didn't have goals or anything.

In actuality, Kimberlye had not found ways to connect to her university during the first semester. The clubs were "not interesting" to her, the "food is terrible," and nothing

had "really grabbed" her attention. Even a course that she was excited to take on God and morality turned out to be something far different than she was expecting. "I was like, I love the title. I'm interested. I want to hear other people's view on God and morality. Then when I went to the class the first day, it was nothing. I was expecting a much different class." So she dropped the class. In her English class, she also had a difficult time connecting. She emailed her professor three times about an assignment without a response, so she interpreted that to mean the professor didn't really care. She was sure she had the right email address because it was on the syllabus. When asked if she had tried to speak with him directly, she shook her head. "I had that thing that he just, he just didn't like me for some reason. Then that class, I'm always two minutes late. It's like I think it's not working in my favor in that class."

Kimberlye spent much of her free time on campus reading, a habit she picked up after the Haiti earthquake when the family lived in a tent with no electricity or Internet. Prior to the earthquake, she didn't like to read. She met a woman who lived in a house with a library full of all sorts of books. "Every day I went to borrow a couple of books. Every afternoon, I go for a walk, sitting somewhere that's quiet and I started reading. That's how I developed my love for reading." Reading was also instrumental in Kimberlye learning English after she relocated to this country. "When I can't understand the language, I read. I understand the language before I speak it. It's so weird. I started reading, reading, reading, reading and I've started talking." Yet she failed to have the confidence in her language skills to participate in class.

I'm still learning the language, so I feel uncomfortable talking. That's one reason

I don't like to participate, engage in conversations. It's like, I feel like people

won't understand me, they'll have a hard time. They're like, "Oh no. I understand

you perfect," and I'm like, are you sure? It's that doubt that makes me not want to

talk in class or anywhere, actually.

She experienced the same difficulties making friends. By her estimation, everyone else

seemed to assimilate better than she did. People told her there would be others just like

her, others nervous about making new friends; Kimberlye did not see it that way. Instead,

"everybody's like a best friend on campus." As a result, she spent much time alone in her

residence hall room during her first semester.

She talked with her dad each day, and she went home most weekends. When her

dad called, he "asks me how I'm doing, am I comfortable, do I need anything, like how's

things going about all my classes. But that's all. My dad is not the person who goes

deeper." She thought she would like the college experience better if she commuted, and

she shared this with her college access counselor even before entering college. Her idea

was met with skepticism, with others advising her that she needed to live on campus to

have the expected college experience. When at home on weekends, she assumed many

responsibilities, including caretaking for her younger brother and cooking the family's

meals for the upcoming week. It's a role she adopted when they moved away from her

stepmother.

My brother, he's more into playing basketball, sports like that. Schoolwork, it's a

no-no, so I'm pushing him. I have to threaten him because my dad is out working

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at night is not really paying attention towards my brother. So I'm controlling, being like a mother … Okay, what my aunt was doing to me because he doesn't want to do things by himself so he needs somebody to yell at him to do something. He probably hates me for that.

Her aunt phoned occasionally and, as per usual, the conversation centered on Kimberlye's plans to get all A's. She assured the aunt that was, indeed, the plan.

Among the pieces of advice Kimberlye continually received from her family was, "Don't forget where you come from, what your family has to do. They always say that. It's like making you feel guilty almost." She was reminded by her aunt that she had goals, that she was going to college for something, that she was in control of her own life, and that she should not let others pressure her into things. By the end of the semester, these messages continued to ring true and Kimberlye was still not having the typical college experience – making friends, joining clubs, and enjoying things. She was considering declaring a major and proudly announced that social work was what she wanted to do. When she shared this news with her family, her excitement was met with the reminder that she needed to choose wisely and make money. Although her days went quickly, she admitted the evenings were lonely. Nothing, however, was going to deter her from realizing her goal of earning a college degree.

The Virtual Go-Along

Kimberlye did not share her aunt's address in the Mid-Atlantic state where she first lived after coming to the United States from Haiti, but she did share the name of the high school she attended. The sprawling high school was in stark contrast to many urban

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high schools constrained by space. Numerous athletic fields surrounded the high school structure, resembling a sports complex as much as a high school. Soccer and football fields in addition to three baseball diamonds stood out in an aerial view of the school. Kimberlye remarked that the high school had thousands of students, yet she was one of a handful of Black students at the school. She offered no comparison to the private school she attended in Haiti before the earthquake. The high school was not in a neighborhood of homes but among large chain retailers, fast food restaurants and hotels.

We then visited the urban high school she attended after moving back to live with her father. Unlike the sprawling high school near her aunt's home, no athletic fields or sprawling complex greeted us on the computer screen. Instead, we found a large, red brick structure on a busy city street in neighborhood known for its predominantly minority demographic. A large community center anchored the school on one side and offered a seamless connection from one structure to another. A major city artery was a block away from the school's entrance as well as a busy railway station. As we explored the area around the high school, Kimberlye remarked that this school felt more "like her" since most of the students were of color.

Finally, we visited her home, less than a mile from the high school. The all-white apartment building was distinguished from most homes on the street. The plain façade of the L-shaped, three-story building with a parking lot in front was stark in comparison to the architecture of most homes – both single and multi-family -- that lined the street. Her family lived in the unit facing the street on the second floor. Across the street in the next block was a pristine white church common to the Northeast area. Behind the church were

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an elementary school and a modern fire station on either side of a cul de sac. On the same

side of the street as Kimberlye's home, across from the church, was a small memorial

park. As we virtually traveled up and down the street, there was a void of retailers or

commercial properties. A few small shops could be found a few blocks away, but

Kimberlye's street was largely residential although it was situated at the intersection of

two major thoroughfares for the area.

Observations

Kimberlye's high school was an urban, public high school with nearly 400

students, 98 percent of which were students of color; about 80 percent of the students

qualified for free or reduced lunch. Unlike the exam schools within the public system,

Kimberlye's high school had a 66 percent graduation rate, an indication of the challenges

faced by those who lived in the school's district. Kimberlye, while willing to visit these

sites, was not overly excited or forthcoming while sharing the sites. The contrast of each

of these locations to the farm where she lived in Haiti cannot be understated. Kimberlye's

quiet, soft-spoken demeanor belied her strength and resilience.

Karley

Four Words or Phrases

- *Dedication to stay focused on doing well in school.*

- *Help from my mother, who serves as both mom and dad and tries to give her own children what she did not receive from my grandmother.*

- *Love from my mom, sister and brother.*

- *Complete support, even when they don't understand what I need support for.*

Her Story

When spending time with Karley, one thing became evident: she was self-reliant, except where her family was concerned. She mentioned this fact on several occasions in each of our conversations, along with phrases such as "don't trust everybody," "be smart and watch out for your surroundings," and "don't be a punk." While these expressions may have seemed to suggest a hardened young woman, that was not the actuality of the enthusiastic, approachable college freshman who shared her experiences with me. As she talked about herself, a picture emerged about how this self-reliance developed; a picture also emerged of a young woman surrounded by unwavering love and support from her family, something that bordered on stifling in her own estimation. Karley was the youngest of three children and grew up in a single-parent home with her mother. Her father had not been part of her life, largely because he was in prison for most of it. She spent her early years in a homeless shelter and, after intermittent bouts of living with relatives, things eventually got better for the family. They lived in a duplex for a few years in a blue-collar suburb around the time Karley entered middle school, and the family eventually moved back to the city and into an apartment by the time she entered high school.

Karley's mother, who worked as a nursing aide, did not complete high school. Her sister attended a two-year post-secondary certificate program and taught in an elementary after-school program; her older brother graduated high school and worked in food services. She remembered being bullied in middle and high school, and she recalled how her family became her safe place from all this, teaching her to stand up for herself.

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Karley described her mom as very protective. She would not allow Karley to "go out and roam the streets," an experience that she said distinguished her from many of her friends in her neighborhood. She got her first job at 14 and, by her own estimation, made "a lot of money." She wanted to work not only so she would have money for herself but also to help out the family. Other than being compelled to make and contribute money, Karley first became vaguely aware of her social class in middle school. Prior to that, as long as she had a bed to sleep in and clothes to wear, she said she was contented.

> I didn't really know when I was younger because I didn't pay attention to that stuff because I just know I had a bed to sleep in. I had food. I started to notice probably when I was in middle school, because like how we moved back to [city]. We moved to [suburb] and we lived in a two-person house. Yeah, that was when we really upgraded. Then we moved to [city] and then we lived in an apartment and stuff so around that time.

It wasn't until later when she started college at a four-year public university that she again became aware of social class differences. Although she shrugged and claimed she didn't really care about the differences, her language suggested otherwise:

> Yeah, and it's like a lot of people who have money here, they don't care. They party all the time. I've never partied ever since I've gotten here. I haven't gone, done anything. I've always stayed in my dorm. It's like, you can come here for free and you slack off. I'm like, I'm the one trying hard.

> Finishing high school, she said, was not a choice. As a high-school dropout, her mother was determined that her children would finish high school. College, however, was

always more optional. Karley recalled that her mom was involved in her grade school, attending all the open houses and parent/teacher nights, but she was less involved when Karley moved to high school where her mom relied on teachers and counselors to keep her informed about Karley's progress. Karley applied and was selected to attend a pilot high school within the city's urban school district; the pilot high school mirrored charter schools with flexibility in staffing, per-pupil budgets, curriculum and assessment, and unique school scheduling. Although college preparatory by design, the high school was less influential in Karley's decision to attend college than the many college-possible programs she experienced growing up. As a two-sport athlete – volleyball and track – Karley was directed into co-curricular activities throughout high school, many of which were designed to facilitate leadership and college readiness activities. One of the most influential college-possible mentors was a staff member from a scholar athletes program in the city. According to Karley, the mentor would continually tell her she needed to go to college. "She thought I needed space and also just to further my education because when you have a college degree, you can basically do anything. She was right."

Even before high school, college-possible programs had long been a part of Karley's life. One program, with a motto to serve high school students "high in potential and short on opportunity," selected Karley for its program that spanned summers throughout high school as well as into college.

> They send you out in the woods and stuff. It didn't help me at all. It made me miserable. I feel like they tortured me because you send me out into the woods to hike and stuff and build character but how does that relate to college. They were

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disappointed in me because I stopped. It's like, if I don't feel comfortable and you're still trying to make me stay. They were on the phone with me and they were trying to convince me to stay.

A second program, however, she loved. While in elementary school, she began participating in a summer camp program for under-resourced youth. She would spend one month each summer at the program's sleepover camp – a camp with a reported mission of providing "activities and experiences to broaden horizons, teach them new skills and help them grow into the next generation of leaders." Although Karley had been participating in the program since fifth grade, she dropped out the summer before grade 11 in high school:

> It's kind of like [college access and success organization] because they help you get into college too and all that stuff, but it's a camp. As you get older, you switch camps, to Camp [name], which is for older kids. One year, they take the whole entire summer and you travel on the bus to different colleges. You sleep at the colleges and stuff. It's really cool but that was the year that I dropped out because I got my first job. It was either work or go to camp. They took a plane to Wyoming to hike and camp for the whole month and I had never taken a plane. I was terrified so I was like, "I'll take the job," rather than that. After that, I couldn't continue in the program.

Despite all these college-possible programs with outreach efforts, Karley's tour of her current university was done with her high school when she was a senior and served as the catalyst for choosing the public university. Her college was located 29 miles from her

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home in the city, and none of her family had traveled to visit her on campus.

Karley acknowledged feeling both lucky and proud to be the first in her family to attend college. Despite the closeness with her family, she admitted she "needed space" from their overprotectiveness; she also wanted to attend college so she could do something with her life. The transition to college had been stressful, leaving Karley to question whether she would make it a full year. She acknowledged feeling constant pressure to do well and not slack off, and she struggled most with time management. Between the demands of her academics and Work Study job, she wryly admitted she didn't even have time for naps. She travelled home every weekend because she missed home and because she could get more work done with fewer distractions; she also went home because her mother missed her and wanted her home, a responsibility Karley acknowledged and accepted. On these weekend visits back home, she talked to her family about college – the food, the schedule, the workload – but she knew they could not fully understand her day-to-day world of college. Ultimately, she believed she belonged in college but she admittedly felt greater comfort when she was at home with her family, especially her mom. Although she talked of coming to college to be independent, her actions often spoke otherwise: "I know but then, you miss her cooking and all this and just my bed, my big bed and being with her because I talk to her throughout the day but I just, sometimes I want to actually be with her, you know?"

Karley often mentioned that she was distrustful of people and friends "come and go." Her own father, who called her after she got to college, forgot her birthday even after asking her which day it was a few days before; she wasn't surprised. Karley was

quick to say she did not want people to feel bad for her because her family didn't attend college. After all, she said, her mom didn't even finish high school because she had a child, creating a distraction from school for her mom. Karley expressed gratitude she didn't have the same distractions as her mom and, instead, felt unconditional support to focus on school.

> School was everything for me and help, like, by my mom, because I don't really keep in contact with my dad. I don't really know about his background but my mom she didn't receive no help from her mom. She was a terrible mother to her. I feel like my mom, she helped me a lot with everything, especially my brother and sister too. Love, because again like my mom, she didn't receive no type of affection, no love, no anything to show that someone cared for her. I also feel like I received that. I should be lucky that I have that as well as support, because [family] supported me the entire way.

As for her dad, she said, "I think he'd want to be proud, but he has like 19 other kids so, it's whatever if I don't have his support. Because my mom is my dad too so she had to play both roles."

Karley's transition to college was not an easy one, although she believed she had turned a corner as she neared the end of her first semester. Feeling the stress of managing her time and workload during the first few weeks of the semester, she told her mom, "I don't even think I'm going to be able to make it out the year, because I had a lot of work to do. I was behind on so much stuff and I was stressed out and crying in class." After another weekend at home catching up on work, Karley felt much better. Several weeks

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later, she admitted to finding ways to better manage her time and to complete coursework at school, leaving her weekends at home for relaxation with her family. Despite leaving campus most weekends, she found time to be involved in a few activities, including being asked to model for an African Night fashion show on campus, a "long-long dream" for her.

Keeping a positive attitude and looking for people to help with the transition was the key to her success, Karley claimed. "If you actually work hard, you can have positive outcomes. You just have to try." Connecting with other first-generation students had been part of her positive outreach, and she proudly announced she was telling her story as a first-generation student in a final essay for a writing class. She was also including stories of other first-generation students and statistics about college success rates for this population. When asked about what she's learned through her paper-writing research, she said that attempting college was a positive outcome, even if a degree was not earned:

There's people who they don't want to go to college because they know their situation [first-generation, low-income], and then there's people who actually try. Even if they don't make it they know they have the choice to [go to college] so I think that's kind of interesting. One that I've learned about, he went to college in [another state] and he worked and lived at home and went to school full-time. But his GPA was below a 2.0 so he couldn't continue school. Just the fact that he actually tried it out, I thought that was interesting.

I reminded her that she didn't think she would make it through the first semester of

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college a few weeks ago. By Karley's assessment, living on campus and connecting with others "like her" made the difference and led her to believe she would make it through.

The Virtual Go-Along

Karley took me to her high school, a large three-story red brick building in a largely residential neighborhood on the outskirts of the metropolitan area where she lives. When taking in the aerial view, it appeared as if the triangular structure had been dropped among single and multi-family homes. We toggled back and forth between a map and a street view that provided a sense of where her school is located and how she reached it from home. Each morning, Karley took a combination of public transportation options to get to school – walking from home to a subway train and, at the end of train line, taking a bus to school. It was rare when the trip took less than an hour each way. As an athlete, she relayed, she stayed after school a lot. We plugged in names of other high schools where she competed as she explained how busy she was as a two-sport athlete in high school. She talked about traveling by bus to other high schools.

Karley showed me her home, a multi-family, three-story structure on a neighborhood street lined with similar properties; a zoom-out depicted the surrounding streets of similar residential composition. The home – with small terraced gardens on either side of the walkway leading to the entry – was distinguished by porches that extended from the center of the house and created perfect symmetry with windows on either side of all three floors. Karley noted that the street view picture was somewhat out-of-date because the house now looked different, although she did not elaborate on those differences.

Karley was excited about the virtual tour, and continually exclaimed "this is so cool" as we moved from location to location. She asked if we could look at the duplex she lived in before middle school – the one where they moved after the homeless shelter when "things started to get better." She recalled the street address, we entered it into the map search, and we found the street view for the location. Karley's excitement was palpable. She hadn't seen the house in years, and she started to list all the things that had changed about it. The paved parking spaces on the side of the house used to be a little hill where she rode her bike. She told me the hill is gone but to trust her, it used to have this little hill that she would ride her bike up and down. She asked if we could pull out and look down the street, which we did. She quickly pointed out a split-level home across the street that had puppies when she lived there. The duplex, which represented a time of great positive change for Karley, was an unexpected highlight of our virtual tour. As with most of our go-along, Karley continued to murmur, "This is so cool."

Observations

Karley's self-described lack of trust in people was in sharp contrast to her enthusiasm during our time together. She was not at all guarded in her conversations with me, and our virtual go-along was memorable; she had never used online mapping tools or street view options, and she reveled in the freedom we had to go to many different places. Her high school, technically a pilot school, was not a charter school but a selective college preparatory high school within the city's public school system. As part of the urban school choice program, Karley's high school with just over 500 students is 92 percent non-White with 88 percent of the student population economically

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disadvantaged, as determined by eligibility for free or reduced lunch. A separate, smaller pilot school shared the physical space of the high school; the athletic program that Karley participated in is a joint effort with the second smaller and equally selective pilot school.

Fili

Four Words or Phrases

- *I would say it's really hard.*

- *I would say it makes me sometimes feel strong because I'm doing it all by myself.*

- *I'm really responsible to myself.*

- *I'm trying to sacrifice myself, word hard, do what I have to do, make my future. I'll be improving my life and other people's if I get a better job.*

Her Story

As an immigrant from Ethiopia, Fili already understood how to live in two cultures simultaneously; adding the culture of college to the mix required her to shift her identities even further. Raised primarily by her grandparents in Ethiopia, Fili moved to a city in the North East as a sophomore in high school. Her father moved to the United States 10 years earlier, and she joined him, her stepmother and stepbrother at her father's insistence that she come to this country to pursue more education. She left behind family in Ethiopia, including her mother, grandparents, a younger stepbrother and many aunts, uncles and cousins; she had not been back to Africa in over three years, although she held out hope her dad would help her return for a visit after her first year of college.

Fili, who described herself as soft-spoken and shy, used the word "hard" frequently: how *hard* her transition had been; how *hard* her family worked; how *hard* it had been to make friends; how *hard* it was to miss family in Africa. Yet education in this

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country was seen as an opportunity not to be missed. Although she grew up attending schools where "everything is taught in English," she lacked English language proficiency, primarily because English was not the official language of Ethiopia. The lack of confidence in her language skills contributed to her overall demeanor, causing her to hesitate while speaking, to choose her words carefully, and to question if she had chosen correctly. When she arrived in America, she noticed how hard life was for her family, and she wanted immediately to work and contribute to the family's living expenses. However, her father believed that if she started earning money, she would not find time to go to school, passing along a value of education that had been present throughout her life. In actuality, she relayed, education was seen as a pathway to not having to work so hard.

Hard work was a recurrent theme in Fili's narrative since coming to this country, and she spoke of the long hours her dad labored as a parking cashier in the city, noting most family members had more than one job. Even family gatherings were infrequent because everyone was toiling long hours at multiple jobs to make ends meet. While many students look forward to semester breaks so they can relax, Fili saw these breaks as opportunities to work more. During the semester's Thanksgiving break, she worked long hours every day at the coffee chain that had employed her for two years. She recalled with some fondness how much easier life was in Ethiopia, where going to school and "sleeping a lot" contributed to a different way of life. Differences in social class were not as apparent to her in her home country, and, she surmised, "we were ok" in Ethiopia. She met other immigrants in her English-language learner courses in high school, but she didn't make many friends, relying instead on family for support. She began noticing the

differences in social class while still in high school, particularly among those who had parents who went to college versus those who did not. Parents who were educated helped their children get through problems, she said, but she could not talk about many issues or concerns with her family; it was help she did not get.

The absence of a specific type of help did not equate to a lack of support by family. Fili realized a great deal of support, particularly from cousins who also immigrated a few months after her. A male cousin, who was older, attended a community college, and a female cousin was still in high school. Fili smiled when she relayed that she and her female cousin were often mistaken for twins and that she spent more time at her cousin's home than her own. While in high school, Fili and her cousin, who was a year behind in school, took many of the same courses, a request Fili made of the school to help manage her anxiety. The support and comfort she derived from her cousins gave Fili some much-needed confidence in her language acquisition as well as the courage to apply to college. Overall, Fili relied on outside, non-family support to help her navigate the ins and outs of college that she did not understand. Buying books her first fall semester was a major hurdle, she recalled. Drawing upon as many resources as possible – including her college access and success counselor – she was able to identify which books to buy, which to rent, and which vendors to use. Likewise, finding others who had accents "like hers" through involvement in multicultural organizations gave her a sense of belonging once on campus.

Nonetheless, she described her academic transition to a four-year public university the way she described so much: hard. She wanted to be a pharmacist, so she

entered her first semester of college as a chemistry major, a choice she soon began to doubt. Although she took a math placement test and qualified for pre-calculus, she erroneously was enrolled in a non-credit bearing pre-algebra math class. She didn't know what to do when she realized the error after the add/drop period ended, so she stayed in the class. She also was advised to take a general education history course, and when she expressed concern during freshmen orientation about taking a class that required a great deal of reading and writing her first semester, she was convinced to stay in the course; she withdrew six weeks into the semester after a failing mid-term grade. She felt she spent many hours studying for her history mid-term and was disheartened when her grade didn't reflect the effort expended. By the end of her first semester of college, Fili was already behind two courses, raising concern about the cost of staying in college an extra semester or, possibly, even an extra year. She found it equally hard to engage in the classroom, primarily because she believed her accent precluded her from being understood. In high school, when she had presentations to make, she would get so anxious that her teachers would allow her to present them privately and not in front of the classroom. Fili experienced physical reactions to anxiety when speaking in front of others – her head ached, her heart raced, and her words did not come out. College exacerbated her anxiety, and she had not found her professors to be as accommodating as high school teachers in allowing exceptions to participation and presentations. As a result, Fili rarely participated in class although she claimed to have "much to say" about the course content.

She admitted that most people in her home country, including her mother, believed that life in this country was easy, that television, more specifically MTV, actually represented the way people live. Most in Ethiopia would not understand that Fili worked long hours to pay for her education, nor would they understand she did not have extra money to send back home on a regular basis.

> He [dad] wanted me to know that when I was there [Ethiopia] that life is not easy in here. Because people think that when you come here, you're chilling. Even some of my friends try to ask me for money, they think we just get the money, and I was like, 'No, I'm just, I go to school and I pay school money. I'm not going to school for free. I pay some money, and I buy my books, so I need money for myself. I'm not only going to school to get paid.'

She hid the truth from her mother, saying she no longer had the job at the chain coffee shop so she was off the hook for sending money back to Ethiopia. College exposed Fili to the different ways in which people make money, something her job at coffee chain did not. She shared with me a paper she wrote for an introductory writing class. She earned high marks on the paper, and as I read it, I was impressed with how beautifully the essay flowed. I was also struck by the story Fili chose to relay and how it reflected her own narrative of an intelligent immigrant woman who struggled to adjust to this country and college. The woman featured in Fili's story, at the time of writing, was a medical student at Harvard, giving hope to Fili for her own transition, aspirations and eventual success.

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In the time between our first meeting (a couple of weeks after beginning college) and our last (a week away from the start of finals), Fili seemed to undergo changes, foremost of which was the shift in seeing her education as important to herself as it was to her family. This realization that she needed to complete college for herself more than for her family was significant, and with some pride she elaborated:

> That's the most important thing because if I'm really responsible to myself, I'm really going to do my work … Even I used to think that I'm going to school for my family, but not really. I'm going to school for myself and my future. When I was back home and writing or something, my dad would say, "study, study," and I was like, oh yeah, and I was acting like I'm reading a book, but I'm not. I was thinking of [college] is I'm not going to school for them, I'm going for myself, so it's more taking responsibility.

The Virtual Go-Along

We started at the municipal bus stop near Fili's high school; it took her almost an hour in the mornings to reach school, and it was often a 2-hour commute home in the afternoons. The large, urban public high school was an imposing white brick structure situated next to a well-known urban hospital and medical complex. Fili described being comfortable in the school because of the significant immigrant population at the school, and she noted that English was the *least* familiar language spoken in the hallways. She mentioned that she attended English Language Learner classes at the school during her first year.

Fili explained that she was not involved in after-school clubs or activities at the high school. Instead, she worked at a coffee chain shop located at a train station for the city's subway system. Since several different train and bus lines converged at this stop, Fili described how busy the coffee shop was, even on holidays. Because of the proximity of the stop to a major medical center, she mentioned that many health professionals came in and got their coffee and always asked how she was doing, some even remembering she was in college. She traveled to and from her job and to and from her cousins' house by bus. After toggling back and forth between street view and map view to orient me on the location of her job in relation to school, Fili then took me to the high-rise apartment building where her father, step-mother and younger half-brother lived.

The brick building with a green awning at the entrance was located on a main urban street and within minutes of the city's historic district. She noted that she and her family lived on the fifth floor, and she was quick to ask if I wanted to see where she spent most of her time – her cousins' house. We "traveled" to another address, taking time to pull out on the map to gauge how far her cousins' home was from her father's home and from the chain coffee shop where she worked. The three-story, multi-family home was located on a side street. Up and down the street were similar homes, separated only by the width of a driveway; next to the house where Fili's family lived was a vacant lot. Fili shared that her family lived on the third floor, and I remarked that the windows and roofline of the white wooden home added character to the structure. She was quick to let me know that six people resided in this small apartment, sharing two bedrooms and one bath. As we "strolled" up and down the street and the neighborhood, she informed me

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that the neighborhood was not entirely safe but she liked being at her cousins more than at her father's apartment. Fili was excited to share news that the cousins had recently learned that they qualified for newly constructed low-income housing in a different part of the city where it was presumed to be safer and where there was more space for six people to live. She texted her cousin to get the address, and we visited the site where her cousins planned to move in a few months. The complex of duplexes was new with many units still under construction and others appearing to be inhabited. Fili realized it would take longer to reach her job from the new home, but it was hard not to share her excitement about the pending move.

Before we ended our virtual tour, I asked Fili to show me her hometown in Africa. Rather than a specific address, we visited a metropolitan area; her grandparents' home was on the outskirts. She showed me a major shopping district complete with traffic rotaries and bright colored storefronts. She explained this was the site of street festivals, and with great animation, she described how people gathered in this location to celebrate certain holidays, lining the streets with banners. She spoke of her extended family back in Africa as she recalled these celebrations, and the nostalgia in her voice could not be missed. It was a positive end to our virtual tour of Fili's home.

Observations

A quick review of Fili's high school website indicated that 94 percent of the population was non-White, and 88 percent of the population was economically disadvantaged, as measured by the number of students who were eligible for free or reduced lunches. This diversity undoubtedly contributed to her sense of belonging at the

high school when she started there as a sophomore with little proficiency in speaking English. Although Fili did not share that her father and stepmother lives in a Section 8 housing community, the website for the property confirmed this; she did offer that her cousins were moving into affordable or subsidized housing. Fili described herself as shy, but when she spoke about her cousins, she became most animated. Fili spent many hours on public transportation, even to get back and forth to her university; it took nearly three hours to travel the 35 miles between the city and the suburban campus, depending on train schedules and transfers. There was a weariness in her voice when she described this journey.

Neymar

Four Words or Phrases

- *Responsibility to myself and my family.*

- *Study and work hard.*

- *Belief in and dedication to my goals.*

- *I would say it's challenge because your family is expecting a lot of you so they expect you to make them proud.*

His Story

Neymar found himself in college after only four years living in this country, and he understood fully the weight to succeed. Neymar felt responsible for his family, in part, because his father passed away in 2006 while the family lived in the African country of Cape Verde. Now he, his mother and three sisters lived together in the New England metropolitan area. He along with one sister and mother moved to this country first with the two additional sisters joining one year later. For the first year and a half after arriving

from Cape Verde, the family lived with one of his mom's sisters, who had moved to this country several years before. Neymar and his immediate family did not go it alone after the move; instead, they joined a large extended family already living here. "My grandmother and grandfather had like 10 kids, so you know, there's a lot of, like, cousins and stuff, and aunts and uncles." Neymar added that all of the extended family resided nearby in the metropolitan area. Although family gatherings could be quite large, they were not frequent in occurrence because "they [family] work so, it's hard to find a time to spend together." His mother, too, worked long hours – 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. most days; she and other family members worked in a commercial bakery.

Since the first day of high school shortly after relocating, Neymar recalled his mother speaking to him about college. As with many first-generation college students, going to college meant opportunity for well-paying jobs and employment. In contrast to his home country where there was more poverty, Neymar admitted his first exposure to differences in social class occurred after the move to America. "In my country, they paid little money for like work … less than $100 per month. The money you can have here in one week, you can have in like three months there." He was quick to follow that statement with clarification: the cost to live in this country was greater so they were not better off even though they made more money.

Neymar was the first person to attend college on his mother's side of the family, noting that the education systems were "way different" from his home country to here. On his father's side, a few cousins completed college in this country and helped Neymar with his selection process. Finding a college where the tuition was manageable and where

he could be successful with hard work were the imperatives. An aunt with whom he lived in Cape Verde instilled the importance of education early in his life. "So she always said to never miss school. So she always tells me, 'Yeah, go to school every day because education is the key to open up doors'." He said this aunt was insistent that he consider becoming a nurse, not because she was a nurse but because she saw it as a good job to have.

Neymar's motivation to attend college was not just about getting a better job or making more money; his primary motivation was to "take care of my mom." It had been a difficult adjustment for him to live away from her while at school, although they were less than 25 miles apart. "I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know how my life was going to be without my mom, leaving my mom…. Because they care about us and they are the ones that pay for college, so you make sure that you call them because you don't want to disappoint them."

Being away from his mom and family topped the list of challenges Neymar faced since coming to college. In the classroom, he claimed he had struggled with his writing class but seemed to be getting familiar with the expectations and process. Neymar attended a public urban high school that served students in grades 9-12 who were recent immigrants and who had little knowledge of the English language; students were placed in the high school based on language tests, and he made significant progress in learning the English language. Neymar liked his college roommate and spoke of social activities around campus. Nonetheless, he acknowledged he was "more comfortable at home," and he returned home most weekends. He dreamed of playing on the public university's

men's soccer team, but he was unsure how to go about making that happen. In the meantime, he continued to be active on a club soccer team that played in an urban league.

Neymar was confident he would complete college. When he visited home on weekends, he socialized with neighborhood and high school friends, many of whom chose to go to work rather than to attend college. As his first semester was coming to an end, he did not find it difficult to navigate between home and college, and he did not judge his friends for making a different choice than he.

The Virtual Go-Along

Neymar's high school appeared like a long, brick island in a largely residential area. The building seemed out of place on the street with single and multi-family homes. A small iron fence surrounded the school and outlined the property, with a parking lot in back and no outdoor courtyards. The red brick structure was flanked on either end by staircases that led to elevated entrances for the building; the ground floor rose partially above street-level with iron-gated windows. The school's center front façade had six large Palladian windows and two identical building wings with large rectangular windows extended on either side. A small flower garden lined the front of the building under the row of Palladian windows.

Neymar lived about three and a half miles from his school, and he chose from a variety of options to get to school, including public transportation. His home was located in the midst of a well-known commercial area located in a historic urban neighborhood. He and his family lived in the middle home of a three-unit wooden structure. Each unit was distinguished by the color of stairs leading to the raised main entrance; each home

was a different shade of yellow. The building occupied a corner lot with parking lots, multi-family housing units and commercial properties dominating the area.

The last stop we made was to the soccer field where Neymar's league played. The soccer field was part of a large community park that filled a hillside and offered open spaces, a playground and basketball courts. The bright green turf stood in contrast to the concrete and tall iron fence that surrounded the soccer field. There were no bleachers or stands around the field, although there was room for teams and spectators along the sidelines. The soccer field was nestled at the bottom of the park's hillside, giving it a secluded feel on one side; the other side of the field faced a side street that curved into a major thoroughfare intersection, leaving only a long building to shield the field from the highway. By all observations, the soccer field and goals were in excellent condition with playing lines clearly marked. Neymar talked about the middle field position he played and he seemed completely at home and at ease in this venue.

Observations

Neymar was soft-spoken and gave the impression of being shy. I believed this was more a reflection of his comfort level with me rather than his overall demeanor. His phone buzzed off and on throughout our interviews, and at the end of each interview, he sprinted away to meet friends. Soccer was Neymar's passion, and he presented most animated when I asked him during the virtual tour to show me the soccer field where he played games in the adult city league. He offered that he played midfield, so when I asked if he was fast, he answered "yeah," without the least bit of bravado; when I asked if he scored often, a smile broke across his face and he again answered, "yeah."

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The high school Neymar attended was 98 percent non-White, with Blacks and Hispanics comprising the majority of student population at 47 percent each; nearly 80 percent of the students were low income as determined by free or reduced lunch eligibility. The school's website addressed the cultural diversity found among its students and teaching staff. The website also promoted that the school offered a rigorous academic experience for students who recently immigrated to this country and who were learning the English language. The public university he attended was about 20 percent students of color, moving Neymar from a majority to a minority membership in both color and language.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The lived experiences and narratives of the participants in Chapter 4 offered
individual stories about families and pathways to higher education for eight first-
generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds at two universities –
one private and one public. This chapter will aggregate those stories into shared
experiences related to habitus, first-generation identity, transition and biculturalism.
Through data analysis and thematic coding of interviews structured to probe how first-
generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds experience the cultural
transition to college, the ensuing discussion provides a collective examination of themes
that emerged from the following sub-questions:

- In what ways do first-generation students perceive their working-class backgrounds?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds
  experience the academic environments of college?

- In what ways to first-generation students from working-class backgrounds experience
  the social environments of college?

- In what ways do the academic and social college experiences of first-generation
  students from working-class backgrounds shape their academic and social transition
  process?

- In what ways do first-generation students from working-class backgrounds make meaning of the transition process?

Additionally, this chapter also will consider implications for research and practice, and possibilities for future research.

Discussion

When designing this study, I chose narrative inquiry as a methodology that would allow me to explore the lived experiences of first-generation, low-income students. No intention was made to generalize these individual experiences to the population at large. It was important, however, that this not be a study about perceived cultural deficits for this population but rather an exploration of how culture of origin and social class impact the transition to college. Specifically, I sought to understand if a cultural mismatch, or tension created when a culture of origin and new culture of college clash (Stephens et al., 2012; Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012), was identifiable as a factor negatively impacting transition during the first semester of college. Equally important was the opportunity to recognize strengths emanating from culture of origin. To do this, I examined the way in which my participants perceived their families and social class, navigated the social and academic environments of college, and created meaning of the transition experience. Following are the thematic findings of this exploration, classified by habitus, first-generation identity, and transition and biculturalism.

Habitus

Bourdieu (1986) described habitus as a "common set of participantive perceptions held by all members of the same group or class that shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" (p. 9). The past, then, shapes the present, often leaving a student from a working-class background unprepared to fit into the culture of college that is grounded in middle class values, behaviors and perceptions. Habitus lends a specific context to the experience of those from working-class backgrounds. According to Soria (2015):

> Habitus is both structured and structuring – it is structured by one's past and present experiences (e.g., family upbringing) and structuring as it shapes one's present and future practices, behaviors, and perceptions. Habitus focuses on individuals' ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and being and how, as they develop, young people reproduce the dominant cultural habitus of their upbringing (p. 14).

Soria (2015) contends that individual agency may allow a student from a working-class background to assimilate into the middle class culture of college or to acquire habitus, yet this acculturation may carry an emotional burden.

As cultural dissonance is associated with withdrawal from college for first-generation, low-income students, it is important to consider the influence of habitus within this student population. While taking caution not to generalize the information presented from this study as representative of all first-generation, low-income student from working-class backgrounds, there are common themes in the stories of the eight students in my study.

This is my family. The answer to the request, "Describe your family," was anything but simple. Of the participants in this study, the majority was from single-parent homes; some were immigrants separated from immediate as well as extended family; some had lived between biological parents or with relatives; some had lived in shelters or in foster care. The Eurocentric notion of a large, working-class family that gathers around the dinner table was not the norm among this group.

Michelle, Jay and Karley came from single-parent homes, and all lived with their mothers. Michelle, who was removed from her mother's care when she was three years old, spent years in foster care living with the same family that also fostered her mother when she was a young woman. Although she reunited with her mother when her mother became clean and sober many years later when Michelle was entering high school, Michelle's narrative provided a glimpse into the complexity that comes with describing family. She admitted it made her uncomfortable when people ask for specifics about her family, and she doesn't identify people as "foster cousins" or "foster aunts." When she talks of family, they are simply cousins and aunts.

While not sharing the same foster home experience as Michelle, Karley moved around frequently as a child:

> We didn't really come from a lot. I used to live in a shelter when I was younger. My mom, when she was pregnant and stuff, she would live at other family member's houses and stuff and like stayed in a friend's house. As the years went by, things got better and we lived in apartments and stuff, got our own car and all that. So, it's gotten better.

Karley's immediate family includes her mom and an older brother and sister; they have other extended family but they "don't really talk to them," relying instead on one another to the point of being "too close sometimes." Karley's father has come in and out of her life.

> He was in prison most of my life but didn't get out until when I was in sixth grade. Ever since then, he's never really been around here and he forgot my birthday, too. He has my number. He has everything. He said he was sick…. When he called, he said, 'Is today your birthday or tomorrow?' I told him it was today. He said he was going to come by later that day or the weekend. Never showed up. I haven't seen him since or heard from him, until just a few days ago. I don't really care at this point.

When her dad told her he wanted to be a better father, she dismissed it and returned to express how much her mother means to her.

Jay, too, had a tumultuous relationship with his father. When he was in third grade, he attended a "predominantly African-American elementary school" in the city. He had continued to struggle since entering elementary school and was held back to repeat the third grade. It was then he moved to live with his father and stepmother in a "better neighborhood" on the outskirts of the city. Jay remained at this suburban location until he entered high school when he went back to live with his mother after his dad "walked out on us." Jay has three brothers and one sister. " On my mom's side, I have one brother and one sister. My dad has two kids himself, and three including me. My two brothers on my dad's side I don't see as much because I don't live with them; they live

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with their mother. My youngest brother, who's in kindergarten, and my sister, we live

with my mom."

While Jay, Karley and Michelle have overlapping experiences living with single

mothers, residing with extended family has been a common experience for Kimberlye

and Neymar. Kimberlye lived with her paternal grandparents in her home country of

Haiti after her mom left when Kimberlye was six months old. When Kimberlye was six

years old, her father moved to the U.S.; seven years later she and her brother moved to

join her father. Even though she moved to the U.S. following the earthquake that

devastated her country, she did not immediately begin living with her father. Instead, she

lived with her aunt in another state for a few months. She hoped to join her father for

middle school, but things did not work out as planned. When Kimberlye moved to her

father's home, she found herself living with her stepmother while her father was working

in Canada. The relationship with her stepmother was not a good one, leaving Kimberlye

to live with an aunt in another state. She didn't return to live with her father until she was

16 years old.

Neymar, who moved to this country with his mother and one sister at the start of

his freshman year of high school from the African island of Cape Verde, lived with an

aunt's family for nearly two years. Neymar and his family moved to this country since his

father had died several years earlier and his mother wanted to join family who had

already immigrated to the U.S. For Neymar, the extended family was large. "My

grandmother and grandfather had like 10 kids, so you know, there's a lot of cousins and

stuff, and aunts and uncles. And they all live here."

Fili shares a similar immigration experience with Neymar and Kimberlye. She, too, lived with grandparents in Ethiopia prior to moving to U.S. to join her father and stepmother; her biological mother was part of her life, but she lived primarily with her grandparents. Cousins from Ethiopia also immigrated to the U.S. a year after Fili, and she described great affinity with them and admitted spending more time with her cousins than with her father and immediate family.

Anna and Mackenzie have parents who are immigrants, and both have always lived in the U.S.; neither was surrounded by extended family and the immediate family was their foundation. Similarly, both have parents who worked in the service industry in low-wage jobs; both also served as translators for their parents who preferred to speak in the native language of their home countries.

For each of these eight participants, family was differently and individually defined, and relationships were often complex. Asking students to "describe your family" was not a straightforward prospect for many first-generation, low-income students, and privilege may be imbued in the request. Similarly, asking students to describe a "typical family gathering" was a question that required deeper understanding of how family was defined. For some students, these may have been uncomfortable questions. Nonetheless, openness to the breadth of answers provided beneficial insight into uncovering the habitus of a student and discerning how their past informed their present.

Work hard, hard work. A survey of extant literature around values associated with working class backgrounds suggested there were differences in comparison to values promulgated by middle class culture. Obedience, manners and expectations of

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being a "good student" were some of the values associated with children who grow up in the working class (Gilbert, 2011). Taking care not to privilege one set of values over another, an understanding that difference existed help provide insight into how the past framed the present for first-generation, low-income students. Repeatedly, the participants in this study referenced hard work and self-reliance as a value instilled in them by family. Education, or more specifically *getting* an education, also was closely associated with hard work. On one hand, hard work referred to the type of labor or jobs held by family member, and on the other, it referred to perseverance. In all cases, education was valued and important, although the levels of intervention and support for early or continued education varied when looking closely at the experiences of the study participants.

Anna described the way in which education and hard work are connected in her family, where her father worked as a cook in a restaurant and her mother worked as a cook in an elementary school.

Education is a big one [value]. Other ones are work ethic. They really want you to be hardworking and stuff. They want you to basically just try your best in everything you do. They always tell me that if I don't reach my goals but I've put in 110 percent into it, it's fine because you tried your best. If you didn't reach your goal, it might not be meant for you. The work ethic is a big one. … I hear that a lot because they do lots of labor work. It's very hard work. They have to stand by the stuff and cook. The temperatures are really hot and stuff. They said that if I get an education, I might have to use my mind more than the physical work and that sounded better for me.

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Education as a means to escape manual labor was the same message received by Mackenzie, along with other values such as prioritizing self, health, honesty, integrity and "putting everything into perspective." Mackenzie lamented that her family was strict with her, especially around matters of educational attainment, but she believed there was a reason. "Well, they didn't have an easy life growing up and so I guess they just want the best for us so they'd really try to push us towards those things." Mackenzie was quick to point out that although her parents expected her to work hard and do her best, "They weren't like the stereotypical Asian parents where they're like super stressful. They weren't that at all, so thank goodness."

Education as a pathway to different types of work was also a message Fili received from her father, who worked many hours as a parking clerk, often taking overnight shifts that left him with little sleep. A phrase from her dad that she repeated was, "Just go get education, and I'm going to be here working." She concluded this reflection with a simple acknowledgment that "he [dad] works a lot," something that often resulted in Fili feeling conflicted. The hard work of getting an education did not balance the scale with the type of hard work or labor her father undertaken each day. Yet her father's message continued to resonate:

My dad said, 'You don't want to start working. You need to start classes for us. If you start making money and you're just going to leave school. You won't want to get your education.' It's important to have someone who motivates you to go to school. I was scared – am I really going to be a good student, am I going to understand everything? I didn't know if I'm going to make it, but I did it.

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Kimberlye echoed Fili's sentiments about hard work. She worked hard at school, striving to model her own father's hard work ethic, and as Fili, she felt conflicted about this type of hard word in comparison to the labor she saw her father undertake. She also concurred with Fili's feeling that things were not as demanding in their home countries.

In Haiti, I wouldn't say we were poor, but my grandma told us a story that how she struggled to send her kids to school and stuff like that. Now they're doing well by getting to school. Well, some of them didn't finish because things got harder…. From stories I've heard and how my dad is working so hard, I was like, 'Then I have to work hard too. He's working hard to give me something. Then in order for me to give him something, I have to work hard to give him back.'

Kimberlye's aunt, who used comparison to others as a motivator for Kimberlye to do better and work harder, reinforced the correlation between education and hard work. "It was like she was annoying … When I'm sad, when I feel like I'm slacking, if I get a grade I didn't like, I'm like, 'If my aunt was there, I would've got a better grade.' Even if I got 100, she was like, 'Make sure you get 110.' It's like, go beyond." Kimberlye added, "I like that about her."

The expectation to exceed others that Kimberlye received from her aunt did not equate necessarily into direct support or guidance. "I learned how to do stuff on my own, read and write. There's no one really that helped me through school. I asked my aunt and she was like, 'I wasn't at school so I can't help you. You figure it out on your own.' I was the one who made sure that I had good grades."

For Jay, the hard work ethic translated into patience and perseverance. His mother often would remind him patience was a virtue, especially when it came to matters of school. While he would demand a need to "do it now, now, now, now," she would prod him to be patient. Yet Jay described receiving mixed messages from his mother, who did not graduate from high school or work outside the home. "My mom was more like I should relax because she said I was stressing myself out about school too much. She always did her best to give me, to make sure I got the education I needed. She was just never into education as much as I was." Yet Jay's mom was his staunchest supporter relative to finding a good high school to attend and encouraging the college process.

Karlye, too, received mixed messages around education. She recalled her mother being involved, even "too involved" in her early education – attending open houses and teachers' conferences – but this level of involvement ended when Karlye got to high school.

> She went to like, probably once my freshmen year, but it was like I didn't really care because that one-on-one conversation stuff, it was dumb to me. Because, you can just call my mom at home if I'm having a problem and stuff, which they didn't really do. That's why my mom was so mad a lot because I would be struggling in school and they wouldn't let my mom know until like, it's like last minute. It's already too late, so…. She asked me too, but she thinks if the teachers see me struggling, they should contact my family to let them know instead of my mom having to call every now and then like, 'Oh, how is she doing?'

Karley, whose mom did not finish high school but went back to earn a GED prior to becoming a nursing aid, was given clear messages that college was optional but high school completion was not. She also was taught to rely heavily on immediate family, to stay true to self, and to be wary of outsiders or others.

Michelle recalled a similar experience in the home where she lived from age three to the start of high school – getting an education was important but navigation through the educational system was largely on her own terms. Her grandmother, who was deeply religious, kept Michelle on a narrow path of "always church, school, church, school." She recalled the opening of a new charter school for grades 6-12 and her grandmother placing Michelle in the lottery to attend, without talking to Michelle. After moving to live with her mother during ninth grade, Michelle chose to attend another school. Although she chose to leave the private charter school with its promise of college readiness and admission, she researched and identified a public charter school option that closely resembled the previous school.

The importance placed on getting an education and going to college was significant for each of the participants in this study. A college education was viewed as the route to a better life and greater opportunity. Hard work and work hard, on the other hand, had different meanings for these participants. When referring to the *hard work*, more often than not, this meaning was directed to the kinds of work performed by family members; most hold blue-collar jobs that require long hours under less than ideal conditions. To *work hard*, however, was highly valued, especially as it related to

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educational attainment. The juxtaposition of these words and the resultant meanings speaks to the cultural foundation shared by the participants in this study.

I know I'm poor. Social class, as commonly defined, represents "groups of families, more or less equal in rank and differentiated from other families above or below them with regard to characteristics such as occupation, income, wealth and prestige" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 11). Ultimately, social class is determined not by income level but by the *source* of the income. The source of income for the families of participants in this study shared many characteristics associated with working-class employment– low-skill, manual labor with little workplace autonomy or decision-making. Social class is elusive and seldom discussed, however, and recognizing one's social class often depends on comparison to others. Although the participants in this study were aware they were low-income, social class was not something they considered until confronted by differences through some experience when they were younger or when they arrived at college.

Anna, who attended the highly selective private university, recalled her first exposure to differences in social class.

> Where I grew up, it was pretty much like everyone was like me. They came from the same backgrounds. But somewhere in high school I attended this program at [private university] to prep you for AP classes and stuff. I did AP bio. They took kids from all over the [state] so from the city, from the suburbs, from different towns and stuff. When we came together, it was pretty much the first time I compared social classes together.

Until the summer high school program, Anna didn't think much about social class. "We didn't have a whole lot, but we had enough to survive, make a living. I wouldn't say too well off, but enough to raise me and my sister." Now that she is in college, those comparisons of social class were hard to miss. "I feel like at [private university], a lot of my peers come from wealthier backgrounds than me."

Mackenzie, who attended the same private university as Anna, recalled a similar experience around social class. She grew up in a neighborhood of different racial and ethnic populations where immigrant identity created a sense of community. "There were a lot of Asians and Hispanics so I guess we grew up with the same traditions and values, and we had similar life experiences since their parents were also immigrants. So growing up was pretty similar for them too." Mackenzie further explained that the college admissions process forced her to think much more about her working-class roots and social class, especially when it came to decisions around how to pay for college.

The college admissions process came with a harsh realization for Michelle. While growing up in the inner city, it was automatic for her to think, "Okay, I'm lower class or I'm poor." The messaging she received over and over again throughout her middle and high school years around college did not lead her to believe her financial position as lower class would limit her college opportunity. Once Michelle realized that her dream college and her first choice were not financially feasible, she opted to attend a state university; her anger was palpable as she struggled to reconcile how misled she felt by the entire college admissions process which appeared to be exempt from the influence of social class. Nonetheless, Michelle held onto the notion that college was a place that

would allow her to re-set her social class. Even though she knew she did not have money, it was different than before. "If I'm in school, I feel like my social class would be looked at differently because of the way I carry myself. If I'm walking down the street and someone were to assume … I don't know."

Jay became acutely aware of social class differences as early as third grade. Since he was not thriving at the inner city elementary school where he attended while living with his mother, he was sent to live with his father in a suburb. He recalled coveting the designer clothing and latest technology of his classmates. Summers were particularly poignant; friends would be lining up summer camps to attend but he never got the opportunity. When he moved back to live with his mother in ninth grade of high school, he became even more acutely aware of his social class. Although his religiously-affiliated high school was private, it was subsidized largely by corporate donations and his family's contribution was minimal. Additionally, all the students at his high school were similar and from working- and lower-class families.

Michelle, Jay and Karley each sought employment as soon as they were eligible by age and began contributing to the family as well as paying for their own expenses. Karley, who spent time in a shelter growing up, was basically unaware of social class differences until much later. "My mom, when she was pregnant and stuff, she would live at other family members houses and stuff and like stayed in a friend's house. As the years went by, things got better and we lived in apartments and stuff, got our own car and all that. So it's gotten better."

Neymar, Kimberlye and Fili, who were fairly recent immigrants, had a somewhat different connotation around social class. Each of them came from a third world or developing nation where their low-income status was not largely distinguishable from others. Each spoke about how hard it was to make it in this country where differences in social class were more apparent. Neymar described his own experience: "In my country, they paid little money for like jobs, less than $100 per month. The money you can have here in one week you can have in like three months there. So, I guess that's a big difference." The money, he said, did not go as far as it would in his home country, with rent taking the lion's share of income earned.

Kimberlye said she considered social class often when she compared her family to others in her neighborhood. "I do because I've seen in the neighborhood compared to people. I eat, thank God. I eat every day. I don't stay hungry. I've seen people who don't eat, have to wait, ask people for help and food. I was not in that situation. My family was providing us stuff to eat. Well, we seem like in the middle."

Summary of habitus. Habitus is commonly held perceptions, beliefs and values that stem from culture of origin. For students in this study, it was important to acknowledge their family structures and childhood backgrounds to understand how these structures informed their interactions with the world around them. For Karley, there was often mistrust; for Jay, there was often a feeling of inadequacy of academic ability; and for Michelle, there was a larger question of identity and belonging. The same analysis around family and worldview could be made for each of the participants in the study. Theirs were not homogenous worldviews, however, and it was imperative to

individualize experiences and the resultant role in habitus. More commonality emerged with themes of hard word versus working hard. Educational attainment was value that was promoted among the participants, and it was unanimously seen as a path to greater opportunity, to something different than their current economic status. Finally, social class may have been unspoken but not unrecognized by the participants in the study. Each was aware of differences in comparison to others, and each navigated this awareness differently.

First-Generation Identity

A consistent definition of first-generation continues to plague the reporting of experiences of this student population. Some scholars opt for a broad definition that neither parent nor guardian obtained a bachelor's degree (Davis, 2010), while others advocate for a narrower definition that neither parent nor guardian has formal education beyond high school (Ward et al., 2012). The argument follows that any experience in college can provide insider knowledge and information about the college process to a son or daughter. While the debate around definition continues, there is little disagreement among scholars about the characteristics of first-generation students, with extant literature predominantly framed through a deficit lens, or what these students are missing from a social and cultural capital standpoint.

Ward et al. (2012) summarized existing research comparing first-generation and continuing-generation students in two categories: reasons for pursuing higher education and first-year experiences. Reasons to pursue higher education were *similar* across both first- and continuing-generation groups: friends were going to college; parents expected

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me to go to college; high school teachers and counselors persuaded me to go to college; wanted a college degree to achieve my career goals; wanted the better income the college degree provided; wanted to gain independence; wanted to acquire skills needed to function effectively in society; and did not want to work immediately after high school. First-year experiences, however, were *different* between the groups. First-generation students felt less prepared for college than other students; worried about financial aid; feared failing in college; knew less that other students about the social environment of the institution; and felt had to put more time into studying (Ward et al., 2012).

The participants in this study were accurately reflected in the Ward et al.'s (2012) comparison of first-generation and continuing-generation characteristics with some divergence on the matter of academic preparedness. Missing from the Ward et al. (2012) summary, however, was comparison of early messaging around college and the manner in which family support was offered. Participants in this study provided some insight.

Messaging about college. Stephens et al. (2012) posit that children from middle-class backgrounds often see college as a venue to realize individual potential in an environment that fosters independence. Those from working-class backgrounds are generally socialized with different expectations of college, where dreams often are secondary to practical considerations of jobs that earn a good living. For a few participants in this study, the messaging around college began in childhood, but for most, it began in earnest in high school. For all, college was essential if they were to attain upward mobility.

Yet this upward mobility was not for the sake of the individual. The notion of interdependence or doing for others also is prevalent among many first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. Stephens et al. (2012) view this "adjusting and responding to others' need" (p. 1179) as a characteristic embedded in working-class culture. Repeatedly the participants in this study wanted to be college educated so they could make things better for themselves and for their families, and most were not only encouraged but also expected to attend college.

Karley was a bit of an exception when it came to messaging around college. Her mother never put pressure on her to go to college. Finishing high school, a feat her mother did not accomplish, was non-negotiable. "I mean my mom wants us to like, graduate high school and stuff but if we don't want to go to college, she's fine with that. She understands because she didn't have that experience." Karley was quick to point out her mother didn't stand in the way of college, but rather she left the choice to Karley, a stance mostly unheard of with those from middle-class backgrounds.

Kimberlye had a similar experience with her father. While the she was left with the impression that attending college was her choice, there were strong messages about how much harder her life would be without a college degree. College was not about finding a career or passion but about making money, Kimberlye continued. "When I said I wanted to be something, [father] was like, 'You have to find something that makes money. Now, you don't do something because you like it, you do something because you're making money from it'." Each college discussion Kimberlye had with her dad was

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framed in this context of finding a well-paying job – not choosing based on whether you like a career or not but if there was opportunity from that career.

The messaging was equally clear for Michelle, Jay and Neymar – a college degree would lead to more money and higher paying jobs; higher paying jobs would, in turn, allow them to help their families improve their overall economic position. Michelle, who participated in charter schools and other college possible and access programming, recalls talk of college beginning in middle school. "If you go to college, you get a degree, you get more money. So money was always the motivation for me because if I don't want to do a paper, I'm just like, if I don't do this paper then I'm not going to go to college, I'm not going to make money, then I'm not going to do that."

Jay did not remember a time when he was not told he should go to college, especially from his mother and stepmother. While they could not fill in the blanks about what college involved, their message was consistent: "Oh, if you're going to go to college you will make a lot of money and you will be successful. You have to go to school to do this or to do that. They kind of just said it like that and I was okay, college, college." Jay admitted he didn't know what going to college entailed, but the messages he received about attending were unmistakable.

Neymar recalled his aunt, who lived in the U.S. prior to his family moving here, would speak of college and opportunity in tandem, as if they were conjoined words. Although he didn't know what "more opportunity" meant in those early conversations, he soon learned it meant "to get a better job, to make better money, so I can take care of my mom."

Anna and Mackenzie exemplified the more sophisticated and combined notion of college as a way to continue growing intellectually as well as economically. For both, their parents saw intellectual growth as a priority with the outcome of higher paying jobs secondary. "I want to keep growing and exploring my own interests. I know how hard it is to make a living without any degree because I saw that through my parents. I want to live a better life. I want to use my knowledge to continue growing and seeing what I do for myself and others." Mackenzie, who participated in dual enrollment programs run by two selective universities, viewed attending a four-year school as the natural progression or next step; her parents shared this view. "My parents were just like, 'How do you feel about going to [private university] since you're taking classes there an all that stuff, since you're with other college students'?" Despite this focus on intellectual growth, both women understood that college degrees equated to better jobs and greater contributions to their families.

Support from family and others. Lareau (2003, 2011) posits that social class differences can be evident in parenting styles. Cultivated growth, characterized by parents who hover, schedule activities, foster talents and intervene to solve problems, is more closely associated with middle-class parents; natural growth, characterized by allowing children to develop naturally in a safe and stable environment, is more closely associated with working-class or poor parents. Children who experience cultivated growth often have a sense of entitlement while those from natural growth environments are more constrained (Lareau, 2003; Gilbert, 2011). Differences in parenting styles do not equate to less support, which is often an erroneous supposition about first-generation

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students from working-class backgrounds. All the participants in this study have parents and extended families that cared deeply about their educational progress, although the ways in which they were able to support the college process differed from those of middle-class backgrounds. Additionally, each of the participants in this study benefitted from the support of the college access and success organization of which they were a part.

The college access and success organization was instrumental in guiding the participants of the study in obtaining cultural capital. The organization's counselors helped the participants navigate the college application process, including financial aid applications, and they continued to mentor and support students once they were matriculated in college. As Karley said, "I had a lot of [college possible] programs but I didn't really finish them. [Access and success organization] is the one that I started and I'm still sticking to because I feel like it's the most one that's helpful." Neymar concurred. Although he believed he would have made it to college, he knew it "wouldn't have been easy." Michelle echoed this. "If I didn't have [access and success organization], I don't know. I would've found some way, but it was really helpful in the college application process because everyone else's mom, dad or aunt who went to college was helping them. I just went to [access and success organization] because I didn't know."

For Anna and her entrance into a more selective university, [access and success organization] expanded her choice of possible schools. She didn't get accepted to her first choice, and an access counselor suggested she consider her current school; she had no

regrets. Beyond the selection process, which was important, the ongoing relationship with a success counselor provided needed transition support. From buying books to understanding the add/drop process, participants relied on their outside success counselors for guidance.

High school principals, counselors and teachers also played a significant role for the study participants, both in accessing higher education and in transitioning to the culture of college. Family support, however, was paramount. While the family support often was not as tangible to problem solving as the support offered by outsiders, it was important for all participants. The outreaches of family support also were very similar among the participants. General questions about class attendance, food and workload were the norm while in-depth questions about course content and transition to college were not asked.

Karley spoke about her mom's support. "She checks up on me like every day. How I'm doing, if I have a lot of work and stuff, if I'm backed up. I mean she would help but she didn't go to college and she didn't complete high school. She doesn't really know but she tries her best to, like, tell me to go get help if I need it and stuff and give me advice."

Fili had similar things to say about her dad, "He's [dad] not going to know anything, so I just talk to him that I have work and he says, 'Okay, just go do it'." Anna echoed this exchange in speaking about her parents, "I asked my parents which courses seemed good for me, but they said they don't know which ones fulfill which requirement so they suggested I talk to an advisor. So my advisor came up with this plan for me and I

agree." Neymar likewise stayed in close contact with his mother, "I talk about the classes, about how scary it is here sometimes, how I have school every day. And I talk to her about how the school works, how the system works."

Michelle's experience differed from the others in the way in which support was offered. While her mother articulated little to Michelle, she expressed her support of Michelle to others, a gesture that surprised Michelle.

Her friends tell me, 'Oh, your mom's so proud of you,' and stuff, and 'She talks about you. She says this and that.' I don't really hear that from her. It's just like maybe she does trust me, maybe she thinks I'm doing this right…. I didn't really know that she would tell people. This is not one of her closest friends, like a random neighbor. It just made me feel good about it.

The experiences of Michelle and the others supported Lareau's (2003, 2011) theory of cultivated growth for those from middle class backgrounds versus natural growth for those from working-class backgrounds. Instead of middle-class parents who hover or who anticipate and proactively deter problems, children of working-class families have parents who may appear less involved in the day-to-day of school or who rely on their child or others to know how to navigate and solve problems. Michelle's use of "she trusts me" was not an indication of no family support but, instead, an acknowledgment of different family support.

Academic confidence. Much of the literature that focuses on characteristics of first-generation, low-income students suggests that lack of academic preparedness is a factor in transition to college and, possibly, lower retention rates among this student

population. The students in my study offered mixed opinions, with some believing they were prepared for college and some feeling less prepared. Interestingly, the differences in opinion did not align with whether the student enrolled in the selective private university or in the public university.

Anna, who attended a competitive high school with well-known academic credentials and who attends the selective private university, displayed the most confidence about her academic background. Her high school was an exam school, and she took "a lot" of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. According to Anna, "Nothing really comes to me as a surprise here yet for the first semester. Yeah, I feel pretty much prepared for the most part." Jay, too, believed his small, private high school prepared him well for the selective private university, especially when it came to teaching him how to seek help.

> When I would need help, I didn't ask the teacher for help, because I didn't want to be stigmatized. My teacher was noticing that. If I didn't know something, I would just fight to think about it myself. I would refuse to ask for help. Teacher would say, 'Do you want help?' and I'm like, 'No, no, I have it.' That was my Algebra II teacher from sophomore year. What he ended up doing was, he always said there were three homework assignments. There's green, blue and black. Green is regular and standard, blue is a little bit harder, and black is really, really hard. I would always do the green homework and the blue homework. He stopped me from doing that. He started me to do black, and I struggled with it. I would hand it in, and I would always get four out of ten, five out of ten. He noticed that I needed

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help, but I still wouldn't ask for help. I think, after a month, he just watched me

struggle. Then he told me to come to him after class, and he helped me. I learned

that it's not bad to ask for help, especially at that school.

Jay said this deliberate process to teach him help-seeking behavior paid off in college as

he did not hesitate to go to a professor's office hours.

Mackenzie, who attended a small charter high school and participated in dual

enrollment programs during her junior and senior years, did not believe she was

adequately prepared for the rigors of the selective private university. Even though she

took more courses simultaneously in high school, including one dual enrollment course

per semester, she acknowledged the rigor was not there overall.

I felt like I was definitely at a disadvantage. Since my school was so small, there

is definitely a lot less competition. There are some kids who didn't try, so there is

no competition. If no one really tries and you're the only one because you're

going to be on top, in comparison to other schools where there's a huge

population so you're on your own a little bit more. The [college] teachers aren't

there as much to help you and hold your hand in the way I guess, compared to my

[high] school, and so I think that was another part as to why it was hard for me to

transition.

The students who attended the public university also had mixed results relative to

academic preparedness. Michelle had a similar experience as Mackenzie in that attending

a small public charter school did not provide the college preparation she had hoped or

expected after attending another charter school for sixth through ninth grades. Her high

school curriculum, touted as college preparatory and vocational, had several requirements that Michelle did not see as aligning with college rigor. "I don't think that that school prepared me for college. I think it was just me wanting to go to college."

Overall, the question of preparedness played out differently in the classroom for the study participants. Some actively participated and some were not confident to do so. The type of high school attended did not correlate directly with classroom participation, although Jay and Anna seemed to be the most confident about classroom contributions. Jay admitted it has been a learning process.

> At the beginning of the school year, I would say the month of September, I did not participate as much, especially the first two weeks of class because I was intimidated. I felt intimidated because I talked to many students. They were like, 'Oh, yeah. I was valedictorian. I was this in the National Honor Society, I was president of this group.' I was like, wow, they did everything that I did. They were in higher positions. What am I supposed to do? This is my first time being in a big class with Caucasians.

Jay recalled that the last time he attended school with mostly White students was when he was in elementary and middle school; the small private high school, where he excelled, was nearly 100 percent Black.

> Then I came here, and I wasn't the star of the class any more. People had better ideas than me. My ideas weren't always praised by professors. The professor would push me even harder. They're like, 'No, not quite yet. Can anyone else help him out?' People helped me out. I was like, oh, wow. Something's not right.

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After a while, I just stopped thinking about what everyone else was doing. When I
go to class, I sit in the front row.

Sitting in the front row made all the difference for Jay; he intentionally was oblivious to the other 88 students who sat behind him. "The professor knows my name, I know his name, I go to office hours and my grades are just going up, up, up in his class."

Anna's journey to feeling more confident in the classroom was not so dramatic. In high school, the classroom size was much larger, and she waited to be called on by the teacher. In college, she found her classes to be much smaller and remaining passive more difficult. "I feel like I'm getting more comfortable talking out in class. I used to just like, was very passive and I just was attentive and I just listened in on the class. Now, when the teacher calls on me, I have something to say. It's a lot easier for me to just speak."

Fili, Neymar and Kimberlye, as fairly recent immigrants, struggled with participation, in large part because they did not trust their language skills. Fili knew this lack of participation most likely reflected poorly on her learning. "Yeah, I feel like, oh, I don't know if the students going to be understanding me, and the professor repeating saying 'What?' You know, it's like, no, I don't want to say this no more. I'd rather stay quiet." Beyond the issue of class participation, Fili also encountered courses with content that challenged her academic confidence.

They gave me a history class. I told them that really this is going to be hard for
me. [Advisor] was like, 'Oh, you have to take history,' but I asked a lot of
students here. They told me, they are like juniors or sophomores, they are not
taking history classes. When I got to class, I couldn't do it. It was really

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difficult….I had my mid-terms so I spent a lot of hours, and you know, when you spend a lot of hours and you don't get what you want, you just don't want to do it no more.

Fili withdrew from the class mid-semester. Kimberlye's fears mirrored Fili's in terms of class participation; she would answer questions asked directly of her by a professor, but she would not raise her hand even if she knew the answer.

When I talk … I'm still learning the language, so I feel uncomfortable talking. That's one reason I don't like to participate, engage in conversations. It's like, I feel like people won't understand me, they'll have a hard time. They're like, 'Oh no. I understand you perfect.' I'm like, are you sure? It's that doubt that makes me not want to talk in class or anywhere, actually.

Kimberlye, just as Fili, also struggled to understand more nuanced interactions in the classroom, including feeling at home with the course content.

When I was looking at the classes, there are classes I thought will be interesting like for my first year seminar…. It was something God, morality and stuff like that. I was like, oh, I love the title. I'm interested. I want to hear other people's view on God and morality. Then I went to the class the first day, it was nothing. I was expecting a much different class. I dropped the class.

For Neymar, writing papers presented the greatest struggle. With English as his second language, he found the writing process difficult. "I'm not a good writer. So, I guess, I'm starting to get it… the steps I should take to become a good writer."

The academic experience varied for each participant. Some were confident in the classroom and felt prepared, some did not; some found the course content foreign with no context for learning it, and some identified coping skills to manage their discomfort. Yet at the end of their first semester as a college, all study participants expressed a desire to complete college. A few already recognized that they would not finish in four years, the desired completion rate, because they were starting with remedial or non-credit bearing classes or because they had withdrawn from classes during their first semester. Others admitted that if they left college, they would not likely return and would, instead, work full-time. All remained hopeful and confident about earning a college degree, even those who questioned fit with their current choice of universities.

Summary of first-generation identity. The independence versus interdependence mindset proposed by Stephens et al. (2012) as a distinguishing factor, respectively, among second-generation students in comparison to first-generation students seems applicable to the participants in this study. Early messaging about expectations for college was present for each participant – either from a family member or an outside agent such as a teacher or a counselor. None of the participants spoke of pursuing a passion in college, but rather each spoke about finding a better, high paying job at the end of college. While some had identified academic participants where they excelled, most mentioned career choices in traditionally high-paying fields – medicine, dentistry and law. Additionally, each participant appeared to be motived by achieving for their family, not just for themselves. Family support was present for each of the participants in this study, although it was more general than specific in nature. Classroom

participation and academic confidence varied among the participants, with each creating coping mechanisms specific to their needs. Kimberlye and Fili were not confident in their language skills; Jay sat in the front so he was not intimidated by others in the classroom who he felt were better prepared than he; and Anna was confident and had begun to find her voice.

Transition and Biculturalism

The conceptual framework for this study included an examination of transition theory and biculturalism. As students moved from one environment to another, they were confronted with new cultural norms. This section explores how the participants in the study navigated the transition and whether they achieved a sense of belonging on their campuses, an indication of a successful transition. Additionally, this section explores how they began to make meaning of living in the two worlds of home and college and how old relationships evolved and new relationships emerged.

Transition and belonging. Davis (2010) posits that transition to college for first-generation students is a complicated matter that involves a desire for upward mobility with a concurrent realization that they are trying to make themselves different from their families. The participants in this study negotiated transition differently. By the end of the first semester, Neymar, Karley, Anna and Mackenzie, while feeling less out of place on their campuses, still felt more comfortable at home with their families; Kimberlye and Fili were more ambivalent about whether they were making a successful transition; and Michelle and Jay were happy for the independence or freedom from home that college brought.

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The cultural differences associated with social class were more evident for the students at the private, selective university than for those at the public university. According to the participants' narratives, it was easier to find others who are "like them" at the public university although the private university offered transition programs for first-generation students of color prior to all freshmen moving onto campus. Mackenzie said she didn't start to settle in until halfway through the first semester at the private university. "I'm like, 'Arghh.' I really regret it because I wish I could have done more to do better because knowing now what I could have done -- I should have done -- but I didn't so it's just tough."

Mackenzie, who moved onto campus a week early to participate in the transition program, wished she had taken full advantage of affinity groups sooner. During orientation she met a group of students with whom she remained connected. Initially, however, she was more focused on home and didn't allow herself to get fully involved on campus or to take advantage of the relationships established through the transition program.

> It was rough. I'll tell you that. I got so homesick. Even though I'm from [university's city], I think what didn't help me was knowing the fact that I could go home but I didn't made me super sad. Other kids, they weren't as homesick. I don't know why. Maybe because I was so attached to my parents, it was just hard. I know just not having their presence around me was different.

Anna, who also admitted to feeling more comfortable at home, was settling into the private university as the weeks wore on. "I guess the transition was very shocking

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because the first day I stepped foot in the school, I didn't really see myself adjusting ever. I wasn't very happy," she says. One of the most difficult aspects of the transition was reconciling the differences in social class and wealth that she encountered. "Maybe the financial aspect of attending college, that's a huge shock because a lot of times you don't have to pay the sticker price of 61K to come to the school for four years. That could be a shock for a lot of people." She continued that the abundance of scholarships she received lessened the financial burden, but she could see "other first-generation students not being ready to take that in."

Karley, who attended the public university where costs were a fraction of those at the private university, was not immune from the same financial realizations as Anna. Meeting new people from "different backgrounds and how their parents pay for everything and how I'm paying for stuff like that. It's just like, 'Oh, I should be really lucky that I'm here'." Karley shrugged off this admission as if it did not matter and proceeded to explain how she was trying to overcome issues of time management and sleep deprivation. In the end, Karley disclosed that part of her difficulty with transitioning to college was her general mistrust of people. "I don't really trust people so … I mean, I have friends and I get close and all that, but at the end of the day, I only rely on myself."

Kimberlye, as Karley, was cautious to engage with others. As a self-described introvert, she disclosed that it was "tiring" and "weird" to be in crowds of new people. She did not trust her accent to be understood, and she felt as if she had little to relate to with those around her. Compounding her lack of belonging, Kimberlye didn't believe the

claim that every new student experienced the same emotions. "They're like, 'You're not going to be alone. There's a lot of people that don't know each other that are as nervous as you.' I'm like, I don't see it. I really don't." She teneds to remain in her residence hall, reading, doing homework, or watching Netflix.

Similarly, Fili noticed the difference between her transition and that of other students around her. On one hand, she heard a lot of different accents and was comforted by "others like me." On the other, she felt the loneliness of navigating this transition by herself.

Yeah, it seems difficult. It's getting hard but there's a lot of places and people who can help you with success. I feel it's good to have parents who were educated because they know how to get through all problems. If they're not, I know they're going to support me to finish my education, to get my degree and stuff, but they don't know what I'm taking. I cannot even talk to them about that stuff. I don't even want to make them stressful about the books I'm getting and stuff.

Jay, who attended both a summer bridge program and a week-long transition program for first-generation students of color at the private university, found fighting stereotypes about Black students most disconcerting.

It's kind of crazy here, because like, when you think about it, most people think of the African-American, in all honesty, will be like the wild ones. Like the ones that are like going out and partying and drinking, crazy and smoking, doing all the drugs. In reality, we're actually the quiet ones. We're not quiet, but we're the smarter ones on campus because we're aware of these things and we see them.

Every Saturday, drinking is like really popular here. It's not the [students of color] that are getting transported. It's usually the Caucasian ones that are getting transported.

For Michelle, the transition offered another type of challenge: she was not sure she wanted to belong. She looked around and saw others who seemed similar to her, and she wanted to believe she could belong. Much of her reluctance to connect with others stemmed from the public university not being her first choice for college. Additionally, she believed college required less responsibility than she was accustomed to.

Well, one of my problems moving here was I didn't have enough responsibility because I'm so used to being responsible – jobs, school, my mom's health and stuff like that. It's a scary feeling like I had more responsibility when I wasn't a college student and now I don't feel like I have enough…. I have a work study job, but it's two hours, three hours. I don't like not working because I've been working like since I was 13. I don't like not working. Being in my room doing homework, that's just not enough. I need more. I feel like I'm useless. I need to be working. I need to clock-in and do stuff because all these free times is not doing anything.

By the end of the first semester, most of the participants had found ways to get involved on their campuses. Michelle joined a multicultural dance group and participated in "open mic" nights where she read her poetry; Karley was modeling in a multicultural fashion show and joined an affinity group for students of color; Neymar selected an organization for men of color which offered him a sense of brotherhood and

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connectedness. Anna, Jay and Mackenzie, likewise, continued to participate in different affinity groups on their campuses; Anna and Mackenzie had also joined service organizations. The individual transition experiences of the participants reflected, on deeper examination, an encounter with an unknown culture; most found connectedness to their campus through association with affinity groups or others "like them."

Changes in relationships. Literature that concerns first-generation students in transition from one cultural norm to another points to a change in relationships with family and friends back home. The participants in this study were beginning to feel some of this tension. Some acknowledged a sense of responsibility to stay connected to family at home, and some expressed the need to protect their family from occurrences at college that could be alarming. Others described becoming cultural navigators, answering questions for family and experiencing a burden to do so. With their friends back at home, the experience was varied.

Jay recalled being confronted by friends at home over a holiday break. His friends asked him if he thought he was better than them because he attended [private university].

I was like, why do I think I'm better than you? My school does not determine my superiority to you or anything. You went to the same high school. We grew up. We did high school together. We're the same. We're all equal. We just had different levels. We worked differently in high school, and we did things differently…. One of my friends, he was supposed to enlist in the Marines, but he never did, and my other friend, he's enrolled in community college, and I'm here at [private university]. They were like, 'Oh, yeah. I've been seeing your Snapchat.

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You have all those White friends.' It's like, so? What's wrong with them? They're people. People are people. You're Mexican and you're Black and I'm Black. I'm friends with you guys. What's the difference? They were like, 'Why are you acting like that? You think you're better than us, because you go to a rich, White school?' I was like, I'm not rich and I go there. It's just financial aid was there enough to help me and my family so I can attend [private university]. They just didn't understand a lot of things.

Jay's hurt from this exchange was apparent when speaking to him. At the same time, he was not apologetic for wanting to be at the private university and taking advantage of all it had to offer.

Anna, who also attended the private university, attested to an initial discomfort with friends from home that quickly dissipated once they started sharing stories. Having also attended a highly competitive high school, Anna's home friends were enrolled in selective universities as well. According to Anna, they shared similar stories around transition and adjustment. Notably, Anna said, "Me and my friends, we just talked differently than we would at [private university]." Anna also noted she and her home friends seemed to text and talk less as the semester progressed. Mackenzie had a somewhat similar experience with friends from her high school who chose to attend college. "It was just very different because all these schools are so different that they've gone to. Just to hear about their experiences and how different their schools are, it's just really interesting because I'm so immersed in [private university] because we have that bubble."

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The participants at the public university had less dramatically different interactions with home friends. Neymar acknowledged no differences in his interactions, citing that many of his high school friends chose not to attend college but to go directly to work. Michelle, who claimed she didn't have many friends in high school, wrestled with the overall transition to college. While she stayed in touch with a limited number of high school friends, she reminisced about no longer being in high school, finding it difficult on some level to move on.

Karley demonstrated different attachment to high school friends. Her best friend, who remained in high school, lamented that she and Karley failed to keep in touch. This seemed to be the case broadly with Karley's friends back at home who had also gone off to college. "I think it's worse with them because they're busy and I'm busy and it's like I'll forget about them completely. I'll see a picture of them and it's like I forgot. I never talked to them in months and stuff."

Kimberlye's difficulty making friends in college appeared to be a carryover from her high school where she didn't have many close friends. Her priority, as with many of the participants in the study, was maintaining family relationships. She was also fulfilling family responsibilities from a distance.

> My brother, he's more into playing basketball, sports like that. School work, it's a no-no so I'm pushing him. I have to threaten him because my dad is out working at night and not really paying attention towards my brother so I'm controlling, being like a mother … Okay, what my aunt was doing to me because he doesn't

want to do things by himself so he needs something to yet at him to do something. He probably hates me for that.

While Kimberlye carried responsibility for family while at college, both Mackenzie and Jay found ways to "hide" information from their parents just to avoid worrying the family at home. Mackenzie said, "I try to word things in a way so that they won't worry about me so much also. It's kind of like the cultural capital. Since they weren't able to go do that, they can't really understand certain things. I definitely have to word it in a different way."

Karley shared that her mother "wants me home every single weekend." Karley tried to balance connecting to the university while keeping her mother reassured, especially since she only lived 40 minutes from home. The pull to go home was often two fold: sometimes Karley wanted to be home, eating her mom's cooking and sleeping in her bed, and sometimes she felt responsible to her mom. "Sometimes I do things for her, but like she does everything for me because I'm the youngest. I'm liker her big baby. That's why I'm so attached to her, and that's why I chose a college that wasn't too far, but far at the same time because I probably wouldn't be able to deal with it, but I don't know."

Jay, who was miles away from home, spoke with his mother about broad general topics and hid other information from her.

When I call my mom, I do not tell her about the social life, right? Or the microaggressions because I don't want her to get worried. I know when I was coming to school, she's like, 'What if something happens? How am I gonna get in

contact with you?' I'm like, 'Mom, something can happen if I go to a state

college. Anything can happen anywhere. It doesn't matter where I go, things just

happen. We can't avoid them.' I kind of got her to go along with that as I came

here, so I don't tell her things that will scare her. I only tell her about academics.

When he returned home for a semester break, he described being in the "hot seat," with

family interviewing him about everything to do with college.

Anna and Mackenzie expressed a similar fatigue at having to be continually

instructive in conversations with family. Anna spent her time with family answering

questions and going into detail about her experiences. Her family sensed "something

different about me," Anna shared, so she tried to go home every weekend, even for one

night. The school had a shuttle bus that she rode to and from the city, which facilitated

her staying in close contact. The biggest difference, Anna acknowledged, was in the

relationship with her sister. "I just feel like we're not really that close. I was really close

to my sister. Right now we text a lot instead of talk face-to-face." Similarly, Mackenzie

articulated the challenge of continually bridging the two worlds of home and college.

It's kind of hard. I don't know. For example, when I would talk about certain

events and all that stuff that are just special to [private university], they would be

like, 'Wait. We don't know that,' and I would have to talk about exactly happens

and all that. Here, it's like an annual thing so everyone just knows about it. You

bring it up and they're like, 'Oh, yeah. I'm going to that,' but here, with my

parents, they don't know it so I have to elaborate a lot more.

Each of the participants was in a different stage of coming to terms with changing

relationships with both friends and family. Those who were most immersed in their colleges tended to recognize the greatest differences. Overall, priority was given to maintaining family relationships over home friends.

Living in two worlds. First-generation, low-income students report living in two worlds – the world of college and the world of home. For some of the participants in this study, this was the first time they had been exposed for a prolonged amount of time to a culture that was different from the one in which they were raised; others had become proficient in navigating two or more racial or ethnic cultures. Three of the participants, as recent immigrants, continued to strive for cultural competency as they transitioned from one country's culture to another's. The transition from working-class culture associated with first-generation, low-income students to the more privileged middle-class culture of college brought additional and different challenges.

Upward mobility is a driving force for many first-generation students who attend college. For the most part, the participants in this study aspired to professions and careers that were not typically classified as working class. Interestingly, the first semester of college had shed new light on different career possibilities that lay before them. Jay, who had worked at a law firm while in high school, wanted to attend law school. While he had not entirely forsaken that dream, he was giving himself options.

> I've wanted to be a lawyer after … I don't know. I was always interested in mock trial. I used to like see it on TV and watch Law & Order and I joined mock trail my senior year of high school and I did really good…. When I first came here, I thought that I needed a Poli Sci degree to become a lawyer, but after talking to the

prelaw professor she said, 'Oh, you can get any degree to go to law school.' I'm

like, oh okay. I can do economics.

Anna had a similar change of mind. She had intentions of becoming an engineer until she

realized [private university] did not offer that major. She began considering computer

science as an alternative. Mackenzie dreamed of becoming a dentist, but the more she

looked into the profession and understood the competitive nature of dental school, she

was considering other options for working in health care. Kimberlye dreamed of

becoming a pediatrician, but determined social work was most likely a better fit. Neymar

aspired to be a nurse, at his aunt's insistence, and Fili a pharmacist; both were undecided

about these professions at the end of their first semester of college.

Fili, who had experienced what she termed an academic setback by taking a non-

credit bearing math class, had not wavered entirely from her dream of becoming a

pharmacist. She continued to see this as a worthwhile career opportunity. What had

changed, in the first few months of college, was Fili's understanding that, while she was

extrinsically motivated to better her family through her educational attainment, she found

herself to be intrinsically motivated as well. "Even I used to think that, I'm going to

school for my family, but not really. I'm going to school for myself and my future."

Acquiring information about the realities of certain careers seemed to speak to a

larger transition occurring within these students. When asked about the notion of first-

generation students living in two worlds, the study's participants were able to articulate

ways in which they were beginning to straddle two worlds. Mackenzie, who lived a short

distance from her university, acknowledged that having no "pre-exposure to all this

stuff," meaning the culture of college, "catches you off guard because you really didn't expect it." She elaborated:

It definitely feels weird to be at home. It's like a whole other world when you're back home now because after most of the semester, being here, you're not with our family as much so you're not in the loop with everything. There's so much catching up to do and you can feel like they miss you a lot more. It's just very weird but at home it feels so much more relaxing than dorms but, again, totally different worlds.

Jay acknowledged pressure to portray a certain image when he was home, one he described as "studious," "stubborn" and a "hardass." "I feel like I have to portray that around the house to keep my image of Jay and at school I'm more like Max and more open with my friends." Jay went on to say he was exposed to the middle-class culture through his work study job at the law firm and also through formal training on language differences, specifically "Black vernacular and understanding American English." He continued, "I know how to code-switch from talking at home to talking to the attorneys to talking with professors. I feel like it's different, but it's not a challenge, I don't think, because I'm so used to code-switching."

Jay was the only participant to label this bi-furcated existence as code switching, although others shared similar experiences. Anna, too, had different personas at home and at school. "When I'm here, I act a certain way, but when I'm home it just snaps back." She characterized this balance of two worlds as a life-long process, "I feel like even when you come out into the real world, you really have to adjust to any environment

you're in in the workforce, so I'm pretty much just getting used to it now and applying it in the future." In short, Anna admitted, "I just cope with whichever environment I'm in." She hoped she could continue to balance these two existences because she knew how difficult if would be for her family if she "became a different person."

Michelle was beginning to fear that others were viewing her differently now that she was in college. "My family hasn't given me any reason to think so, but I feel like when I do go back home, I'm going to be looked at different because I go to school, I'm getting education, higher education." She dreaded this because, from her vantage point, her behaviors had not changed. She saw little difference in the things she did at home with the tasks she performed at college, including doing lots of homework.

Although at different stages of transition, each of the participants acknowledged the tension of becoming different. Most surprising to some was the shift from going to college to provide a better life for their families to creating more opportunities for themselves. In some ways, they were remaining interdependent while becoming independent.

Summary of transition and biculturalism. The participants in this study struggled with issues of transition to college that are expected to impact most college freshmen. They were tasked with meeting new people, getting along with roommates, eating communally, managing their time, and more. In this study, the added complexity of coming from a working-class background into a culture where middle-class ideals are privileged was more evident among those at the private university than those at the public university. Additionally, many of the participants were already bicultural in the strictest

sense of race and ethnicity. How this skill of adaptability translated into a cultural

transition related to social class in college was difficult to discern over the length of this

one-semester study. Furthermore, close examination showed that each participant was at

a different stage on the continuum of biculturalism, as presented by LaFramboise et al.

(1993) and Schwartz et al. (2010) in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of eight first-generation,

low-income students from working-class backgrounds as they transitioned through the

first semester of college. Despite broadly shared characteristics, this was not a

homogenous group. While each student's narrative was unique and not to be generalized

to the population at large, there were findings that can inform the scholarship and practice

of higher education. Based on the discussion in the previous section and gleaning from

the identified themes of habitus, first-generation identity, and transition and

biculturalism, this conclusion is arranged into four categories: virtual go-alongs as

cultural mediators; cultural differences as strengths, not deficits; intersectionality of

identities; and transition as the beginning of cultural mismatch.

Virtual Go-Alongs as Cultural Mediators

The go-along, or walking interview as it is also referenced, is a methodology that

intends to explore "natural" environments of research participants (Kusenbach, 2003;

Harris, 2016). Used in combination with formal sit-down interviews, the go-along

interviews, according to Carpiano (2009), "involve interviewing a participant while

receiving a tour of their neighborhood or other local contexts. In this regard, the

researcher is 'walked through' people's lived experiences of the neighborhood" (p. 5).

Go-along or walking interviews have been used primarily as an ethnographic research

tool in geography and health research, where a deeper understanding of a participant's

environment became instructive to understanding their meaning making process. Harris

(2016) employed the methodology to higher education research in a study of campus

climate for students of color.

Harris (2016) sought to explore the racialized experiences of 10 undergraduate

women of color at a predominately White institution in the Midwest. She chose the

walking tour as a methodology that allowed her to observe the participants' interactions

with the campus environment as well as the campus climate broadly. Noting "higher

education researchers are slow to adopt this tool for qualitative data collection," Harris

(2016) found the reluctance to adopt the walking tour "particularly disconcerting, as the

walking interview, which encourages a focus on environmental perceptions, individual

experiences, and institutionalized structures, offers a unique way to explore campus

climate" (p. 367). Harris (2016) posited that walking interviews "should be introduced to

higher education so findings guide systemic implications for research and practice that

empower minoritized populations, specifically student of Color" (p. 368).

While concurring with Harris about the value of go-alongs or walking interviews

in higher education qualitative research, this study suggested that the virtual go-along

may provide an equally if not more powerful methodology for areas of higher education

research, especially around issues of cultural transition and the role of habitus for first-

generation students from working-class backgrounds. Without doubt, an in-person go-

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along would not have yielded the same observations as the virtual go-along in this study. Kusenbach (2003) offered five environmental themes the go-alongs could help researchers explore while bridging the gap between formal observation and interview. Kusenbach (2003) noted these research techniques could be instrumental when "important aspects of lived experience may either remain invisible, or, if they are noticed, unintelligible" (p. 459). The virtual go-alongs allowed me to explore these environmental themes with participants and resulted in greater understanding of their transition process.
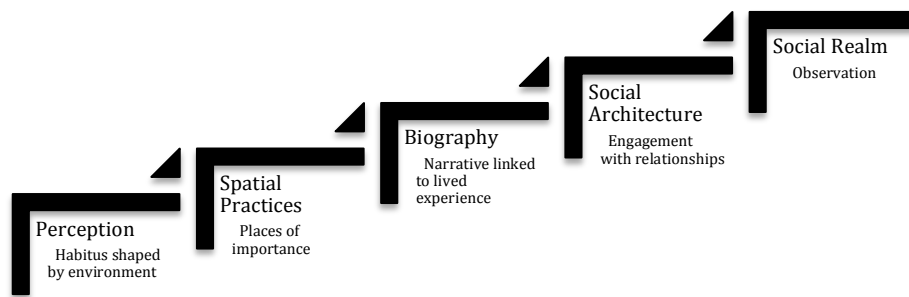

Figure 1. Kusenbach's Five Environmental Themes.

Perception. Go-alongs can shed important light on how a participant's *perception* is shaped by an environment. Returning to Bourdieu's social reproduction theory and the role of habitus (how one comes to think and believe what they do), the virtual go-along allowed me to explore the environmental differences between home and the university campus, thereby indicating a cultural transition. Further, the methodology allowed me to interrogate perceptions as differences were noticed. Anna's go-along was among the most telling as she had never lived outside a large, urban setting until she chose the private university about an hour away. She noted how quiet and "rural" the university seemed in comparison.

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Spatial practices. Deeper understanding of *spatial practices*, or how a participant engages in the environment, is a second outcome of go-alongs. The virtual go-along allowed me to explore more places of importance or formative to the participant. For example, many of the participants in this study traveled by public transportation to high school or work. Others have lived in more than one location – domestically or internationally. An in-person go-along would not have allowed the flexibility to travel with the participant to all these sites, yet all contributed to a deeper understanding of the participant's lived experience. Jay's virtual tour of the busy city streets around the law firm where he worked as part of corporate Work Study displayed the vast differences among the spaces he navigated of home, school and work.

Biography. Go-alongs can contribute to the *biography* or life story of a participant by providing a link between the narrative story and the lived experience of the students outside the college or university setting. Narrative inquiry, the primary methodology of this study, told only part of the story for these participants. The go-along facilitated a richer, deeper understanding than the story gleaned by the in-person interviews. One of the more salient moments of the virtual go-alongs occurred with Karley when we visited the site of her first home after living in a homeless shelter. She was gleeful as she described riding her bike up and down a hill near the driveway and as she shared that the neighbors raised puppies. It is doubtful these details, which enriched her narrative, would have been divulged through formal interviews.

Social architecture. The fourth intended outcome of a go-along, *social architecture*, allows the researcher to situate the participant in the social relationships of

their home environment. The virtual go-along allowed me to create greater context by following up on information presented during the formal, face-to-face interview. For example, Fili spoke about her cousins and the support they offered. During the virtual go-along, Fili showed me where the cousins lived as well as where they hoped to live, and I gained greater context for this supportive relationship. Each participant's neighborhood was different. Some were purely residential so a walking tour would not have provided as much information; a virtual tour facilitated "travel" to more sites. Some neighborhoods were situated in commercial areas, where participants would point out restaurants or other places where they spent time. Jumping virtually from high schools to school athletic fields to neighborhoods through virtual go-alongs helped inform the contrast between the college campus and the places of home.

Social realm. The *social realm* of a participant can be discovered through go-alongs by observing social interactions in the home environment. This was the environmental theme least applicable to the virtual go-along, where in situ observations were not possible. Nonetheless, the demeanor of the participants while sharing their home environments were far less stilted or formal, which again provided me with a new dimension with which to understand the participants' lived experiences.

Harris (2016), in her study of walking tours as a way to assess campus climate for women of color, suggested that an individual's background "informs their interactions on campus" (p. 369). The virtual go-along accomplished the same objective while also serving multiple purposes. While detailing in Chapter 3 the evolution of how I came to use the virtual go-along, I relayed the story of using Google maps with a student who felt

housing projects were misrepresented in a classroom discussion. Although much modified and less intentional, this previous interaction spoke to the broad power virtual go-alongs can have during routine interactions with students who are from backgrounds not normed on the college campus.

Cultural Differences as Strengths, Not Deficits

The intention of this study was to examine whether the cultural differences associated with a working-class background had an impact on the transition to college for first-generation, low-income students. Social class, as distinct from socioeconomic status, is less about the money earned by a family and more about values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions. Jehangir (2010) defined the difference between socioeconomic status and social class, noting "while income may be a numerical determining of one's financial worth social class captures the nature of one's life experience, aspirations, and family expectations, said or unsaid, as shaped by income, work, domicile, and family history" (p. 15). This study incorporated the factors associated with social class to see how they contributed to the cultural transition for students.

Independence vs. interdependence. Stephens et al. (2012) present these differences in terms of *interdependence* for those from the working-class and *independence* for those from middle-class backgrounds. Children from middle-class backgrounds often see college as the opportunity to realize their individual potential in a cultural milieu that "may seem intuitive, right or natural" (p. 1179). College students from working-class backgrounds, according to Stephens et al. (2012), "are likely to have been socialized with different rules of the game – rules that do not emphasize

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independence but instead emphasize interdependence, including adjusting and responding to others' need, connecting to others, and being part of a community" (p. 1179).

The eight participants in this study consistently demonstrated characteristics associated with interdependence through their decision-making, foremost among which was the answer given to why they wanted to attend college. Each said it was to make money, and each said it was to improve life for their family. The notion of contributing to the financial wellbeing of the family or improving the family overall was indicative of interdependence and reliance on others. Over and over, I heard echoes of caretaking for family members expressed through the narratives. While this study did not compare the responses of the participants to those of continuing generation students from middle-class backgrounds, Stephens et al.'s (2012) research proposed that the influence of interdependence mindset was a factor that could impact a successful transition to college. If classrooms and the college culture overall promoted independence as a value, this presented a stark contrast to the habitus or ways of knowing for a first-generation student from a working-class background.

Culture of poverty vs. cultural wealth. In 1963, Oscar Lewis introduced the culture of poverty theory, which at its core blamed those in poverty for having misaligned values that perpetuated poverty, generation after generation. The theory has largely been debunked although the debate around culture and poverty has continued to exist, with recent examinations shifting focus to systemic reasons for poverty rather than individual deficits. To categorize cultural differences associated with working class culture as subordinate to the culture of poverty would be a mistake and was not the intention of this

study. Nonetheless, the extant literature cites working class culture, including the structural barriers that may contribute to its cultural milieu, as a reason for dissonance in the transition to college. Musoba and Baez (2009) contend Bourdieu is often misrepresented in discussions around habitus, cultural and social capital, and this misrepresentation has led to the deficit-based approach that blames students for not possessing the proper knowledge or skills to be successful in a college culture grounded in middle-class values. In other words, scholars and others are quick to cite what students don't have rather than what they bring. Additionally, Musoba and Baez (2009) posited that educational institutions perpetuate class stratification through their own practices and campus cultures.

Yosso (2005), using Critical Race Theory as a lens, repositioned cultural deficit into a cultural wealth framework. The six categories associated with cultural wealth in Yosso's (2005) framework can be applied broadly to the cultural transition for first-generation, low-income students from working-class backgrounds in this study, all of whom were also students of color. Table 3 presents examples of the ways in which Yosso's framework is applicable to the findings of this research:

Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Attribute	Application to Study	Participant's Demonstration of Attribute
Aspirations Capital: Ability to keep hopes and dreams alive and to remain resilient in face of obstacles.	Participants and their families viewed higher education as way to a better life.	*Fili:* "I'm trying to sacrifice myself, work hard, do what I have to do to make my future better, and at least not only even for myself, I think about my mom. At least I will take care of her if I have a good job."

Linguistics Capital: Communication skills in different languages are an asset.	Five of the participants were bilingual or multilingual, and many of them bridged language barriers and served as translators for their families.	*Mackenzie:* "I try to translate some things for them so it's a little easier – because in Vietnamese some things are a little different than it is in English – and so I try to say things in a certain way so it's easier for them to understand…."
Familial Capital: Immediate or extended families create a sense of community and support.	Most of the participants in this study relayed stories of extended family and some spoke of offering or receiving support from extended family; each participant recognized his contribution to the family.	*Michelle:* "If I walk in, if it's a family event, if it's Thanksgiving and I see all the women in the kitchen, it's like wow! When the women are together, it's better.
Navigational Capital: Ability to maneuver in racially-biased institutions – educational or otherwise – that privilege Whites.	Both the private university and the public university in this study were predominantly White institutions; all the study participants attended high schools that were predominantly students of color.	*Anna:* "I feel like at [private university], a lot of my peers come from wealthier backgrounds than me. When I first came here, it was culture shock too because I grew up in the inner city. A lot of my peers were a lot different from this. There was more diversity. Here, there's not as much diversity and social classes – it ranges far."
Resistance Capital: Beyond resilience in the face of adversity, this cultural wealth gives students of color the skills necessary to enter the world with exceptional problem-solving abilities.	Resilience is not something the participants in my study gained through the college experience but rather something they possessed upon entering.	*Jay:* "I know how to code-switch from talking at home to talking to the attorneys to talking with professors. I feel like it's different, but it's not a challenge, I don't think, because I'm so used to code-switching."

Table 3. Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model Application.

Yosso's cultural wealth model was developed for students of color, and I do not intend to oversimplify or infer that it is an automatic fit when addressing cultural strengths of all first-generation students from working class backgrounds. In this study, where the participants were students of color, there was a viable application of Yosso's model to students from working-class backgrounds. In other words, the cultural wealth model provided a reasonable structure with which to consider these students of color and their working-class backgrounds that was counter to the deficit approach. This study did not seek to identify specific strengths or assess individual agency of the participants. Rather, working-class culture was a framework with which to consider the lived experiences of the participants as they transitioned to college – to better understand how they perceived their backgrounds and social class, their family and home relationships, and the campus environments they were encountering. This study demonstrated that it was possible to extend Yosso's cultural wealth model to consider working-class culture for students of color, and in doing so, the study presented the possibility of extending the model more broadly to the cultural transition for all first-generation students from working-class backgrounds.

Intersectionality of Class, Race and Immigrant Status

As stated previously, an unintentional outcome of the recruitment process for this study was that all participants identified as students of color. Additionally, the recruitment yielded three foreign-born immigrants and two students born of immigrant parents. The intersectionality of class, race, ethnicity and immigrant status was relevant to the study's findings although these intersections were not interrogated directly through

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the interview protocols or virtual go-alongs. Statements by the participants, many of

which could not be attributed solely to working-class culture or first-generation college

student identity, gave rise to the importance of intersectionality of identities when

considering the study's findings. For example, the experiences of Anna and Mackenzie,

as daughters of immigrant parents, differed significantly from those of Neymar, Fili and

Kimberlye, as recent immigrants, even though each of their families was solidly situated

in the working-class. The cultural influences of social class were compounded and

complicated by the racial and ethnic cultures of origin for each of these students, and it

was often difficult to assign which influence was being depicted through the student

interviews.

Although this study did not by design explore the phenomenon, the intersection of

race and class has been long studied. Historically, people of color are more disadvantaged

by class divisions, and upward mobility through educational systems that privilege White

norms and values that bring unique challenges and burdens for people of color (Jehangir,

2010; Soria, 2015). With the growing number of U.S. immigrants that fall into low-

income and working-class classifications (Kim & Diaz, 2013), it followed that challenges

and burdens of social class and upward mobility would be similarly experienced.

According to Soria (2015), these intersections of class and race are perpetuated "through

interwoven systems of hegemony and oppression in socially constructed spaces" (p. 4).

Ultimately, social class and its associated culture are differently constructed for Whites,

people of color, immigrants or children of immigrants.

Jehangir, Stebleton and Deenanth (2015) explored intersecting identities for first-generation, low-income students using a developmental ecology theory introduced by Bronfenbrenner in 1976. The model, first presented to examine adolescent development and behavior, has been adapted to college student development by several scholars because of its broad application to examine the interaction between person and environment (Jehangir et al., 2015). Kim and Diaz (2013) modified Bronfenrenner's model and examined the reciprocal interactions between students and their environment based on the "context of specific aspects of a student's life history, social and historical circumstances, culture, and time" (p. 27); Stebleton (2011) applied the model to immigrant students and their interactions and experiences with academic advisors.

In the most simplistic form, the core of Bronfenbrenner's theory addressed interrelated components of process, person, context and time. The *process* involved developmental challenges faced by an individual while interacting with an environment; *person* encompassed characteristics such as behavioral, biological, cognitive, psychological and emotional attributes that impact interactions with others and the environment; *context* proposed that all interactions are undertaken within a system of structures, and these structures emanate outward from the person; and *time* related to when pivotal events occurred, such as the transition to college (Jehangir et al., 2015). Of the four interrelated components of process, person, context and time, context provided the most salient information around student experience, specifically as it related to the environment.

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Context, according to Bronfenbrenner's model (1977), is nested in four additional

and interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Again,

in the simplest of forms, the *microsystem* pertained to the immediate settings of family,

school, work, peers and faculty, to name a few; *mesosystem* referred to the

interrelatedness of relationships within the microsystems; *exosystem,* as a third layer

surrounding the person, represented the social structures that impact development; and

the last layer, *macrosystem*, included cultural milieus, political climates and historical

events that impacted development.
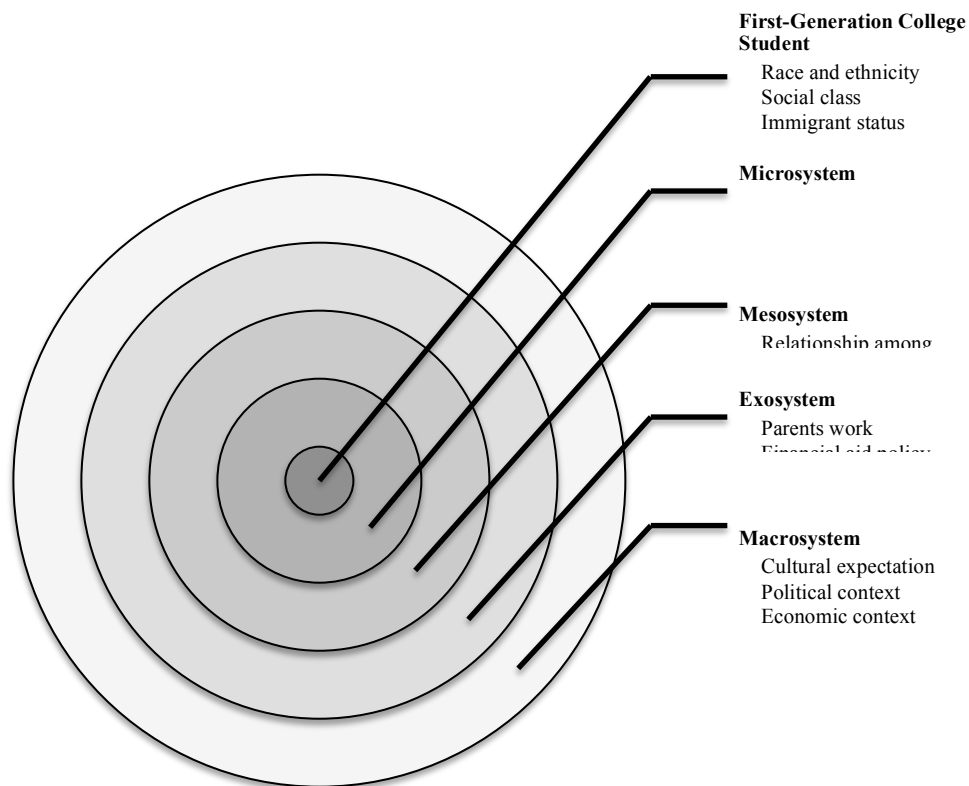
Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's Developmental Ecology Model. Adapted from Kim and Diaz, 2013, p. 29. Copyright 2013 by The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE).

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Bronfenbrenner's ecology model and subsequent adaptions by various scholars of higher education provided a meaningful lens through which to view transition for the participants in this study. For example, three different scenarios demonstrated intersectionality of identities for Jay. First, Jay spoke of the obvious wealth of many students at the private university as depicted by the types of vehicles families drove to campus during freshmen move-in day – Range Rovers, BMWs and Mercedes. Second, Jay had an encounter with a student worker in the bookstore during a summer bridge program that challenged his nationality. The worker insisted that Jay must be an international student since he was living on campus early, prior to other freshmen moving onto campus. In the third instance, Jay was told he was not the "typical Black person." When Jay asked what that meant, the White students responded, "Because you're like all calm and mellow. You're not loud and rowdy." Jay's retort to the person was, "So, are you trying to say that all of us are loud and rowdy?" These three interactions represented one instance of the ways in which Jay's identities of race, class and first-generation student intersected and presented challenges.

In Chapter 3, I presented a table of participants that included race/ethnicity and immigrant status, confirming the presence of multiple identities for the students in my study. While the transition to college presents challenges for all students, the process becomes more complicated and unique with the intersection of the multiple identities of class, race, ethnicity and immigration status. Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory demonstrated how contextual and environmental forces influence the way in which a person interacts with an environment, including those immediate interactions

with family, faculty and peers as well as broader interactions with a range of external forces. These circles of influence were unique for each of the students in this study, and this served as a reminder of the complexity of transition to college; this was far from a homogenous population despite the shared characteristics of first-generation, low income and working class. While not subordinating working-class culture to other intersecting identities, it was essential to acknowledge the intersectionality in the findings of this study.

       Perpetual border crossers. Jehangir et al. (2015) identified "perpetual border crossers" as a theme that emerged from a study of intersecting identities for first-generation, low-income students. Perpetual border crossers, according to Jehangir et al. (2015), navigate "acculturation to college while trying not to give away one's old self in its entirety" (p. 27). The participants in this study, as many first-generation college students, were not entering college to change their culture; they entered college to help their families and to get better jobs. This was a theme reiterated by each of the participants, although each was in a different place in this acculturation process. Some tried to bring their families along with them, educating them about their classes as well as cultural events on their campuses; some tried to protect their families from things they did not think they would understand; and some only marginally blended the two worlds by perfunctory answers to questions from their families about college. Nonetheless, the need to navigate this transition required much adaptability, persistence and meaning making – all characteristics positively associated with the working class culture.

Living in two worlds is often the phraseology used to describe the pathway of first-generation students who enter the academy. In actuality, the study's participants navigated multiple worlds on their pathway to college and continued to blend these worlds once matriculated in college. Class, race, ethnicity and immigration status each required different borders to cross. The three foreign-born immigrants – Neymar, Fili and Kimberlye – faced different acculturation challenges than did Anna and Mackenzie. While Anna and Mackenzie served as cultural mediators for their immigrant parents, their context for college was grounded solely in the U.S. educational system; the recent immigrants did not share this context but rather adapted first to the U.S. educational system in high school prior to the adaptation to college. Jay, Karley and Michelle each presented yet different contexts for transition. While the notion of living in two worlds broadly refers to the worlds of home and college, care should be taken not to oversimplify the multiple borders each student encounters in the transition process.

Too Soon for Dissonance

First-generation students from working class backgrounds bring their own expectations, attitudes and values that represent their cultures of origin to their college experiences. According to a review of the extant literature, the tension created between a student's cultural meaning-making system, or culture of origin, and the new culture of college may result in cultural dissonance, a factor inversely related to likelihood of success (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Berger, 2000; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus et al., 2012). The intention of this study was to understand the lived experience of students entering

this new culture during the first semester of college, to gauge whether dissonance was an early factor associated with transition.

While participants in this study were able to identify cultural differences, none attributed stress or discomfort from this awareness of cultural differences. As a qualitative inquiry to understand the lived experience of a few students, this was not a finding intended to be generalized to the population at large. However, this lack of identifiable stress may have suggested something different. Students in the first year, and first semester in particular, are the recipients of much attention by the university. Colleges and universities invest a great deal of time, money and other resources in orientation, transition and first-year programming. It is possible that the inordinate attention provided during transition programming masked an awareness of cultural differences, at least initially. Additionally, the initial alliance with affinity groups that created a sense of belonging during the first semester may not persist into the second semester or latter years of college.

Social class and microaggressions. I suggest it is not the immediate exposure to the new culture but a prolonged one that leads to greater dissonance within this student population. Again, while not attempting to co-opt a theory founded in the study of experiences for students of color, it is likely that the work around racial microaggressions lends a framework from which to consider social class and the associated cultural transition to college for first-generation students from working class backgrounds. Microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or

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negative racial slights toward people of color" (Sue, Capodilup, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 271). Sue et al. (2007) spoke to the psychological damage prolonged exposure to such encounters that were not limited to human interactions but also to the environment. Anger, mistrust and loss of self-esteem were some of the outcomes of racial microagressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Lawless (2009) noted that many students did not realize their class category until transitioning to the university and, as such, may have been impacted by language and linguistic differences, conversation topics and personal appearance. Langout, Rosselli, & Feinstein (2007) offered six different ways in which classism manifests on college campuses. Over time, these subtle actions can impact a student's sense of belonging:

- *Stereotype citation* is reflected in stereotypical stories about lower and working-class individuals. This type of scenario occurs when instructors make generalizations and state all lower- or working-class people have poor literacy rates. An example of stereotype citation was Jay's experience in the classroom where the professor told him he was not quite making all the right connections and asked fellow classmates to help him get there. Although the instructor in Jay's class did not make direct claims about lower or working class individuals, the impact on Jay when singled out was the similar.

- *Institutionalized classism* exists when organizational rules or structures create privilege. An example of this is not being able to take classes or study abroad because of additional fees. Jay, again, relayed a story that spoke to institutional classism. He described the freedom many students at the private university have to party with

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seemingly few consequences. "It's not the Alana students what are getting transported [for intoxication]. It's usually the Caucasion ones that are getting transported." He went on to say these students came back to campus the next day, slept it off, and everything returned to normal for them. He acknowledged his experience would be quite different; practically, he could not afford the hospital bill, and the risk of disappointing his mother and losing the opportunity to attend [Private University] was too great.

● Interpersonal classism via *separation* happens when individuals are separated or distinguished from others under the pretense of "protecting" that person from being confronted by a higher class. Sororities and fraternities or other types of on-campus housing that cost more or have associated fees are examples of classism separation. While the private university did not have alternative housing to create this type of classism, it did host campus visits specifically for those students who would fall into the category of first-generation, low-income or students of color. Additionally, the bridge program targeted this population specifically, reinforcing for these students that they were different.

Interpersonal classism, according to Langout et al. (2015) occurs in three ways: via *devaluation* occurs when hostile or rude behavior targets someone who identifies from a lower or working class background; via *discounting* which presents similar to devaluation but goes further by dismissing burdens associated with lower or working class; and via *exclusion* when behaviors are perceived as excluding a student from a lower-class background from events.

Dissonance, similar to the impact of racial microaggressions, may occur after repeated or sustained exposure to cultural differences emanating from social class. Hurst (2010) classified students from working-class backgrounds into three categories: *loyalists* who resist acculturation; *renegades* who try to emulate their middle-class counterparts through accumulation of cultural capital; and *double agents* who can move between working-class and middle-class cultures. Hurst (2010) posited that renegades and double agents carried the greatest emotional burden or dissonance. At this juncture of their college career, I could not determine if the students were leaning toward any of these categorizations, and most likely they were more loyalists than renegades or double agents in their early behavior. However, the infancy of their college careers could have contributed to the appearance of being a loyalist. Because the cultural differences were more apparent at the private university, the observations made by Jay, Anna and Mackenzie could have signaled the emergence of renegade or double agent characteristics.

Although there was not a direct articulation of stress, behaviors by some of the participants hinted that different coping mechanisms were being employed to manage the new environment of college. Several of them provided examples of disengagement that could be viewed as a form of self-protection. Kimberlye, for example, preferred to remain in the residence hall and read rather than engage with others; Jay chose to sit in the front of the class so he would not be overwhelmed by others in the class who might know more; and Fili opted to lose participation points rather than risk being misunderstood because of her accent. Ultimately, all the participants chose to align themselves with

affinity organizations to some degree, and this, too, could be perceived as a form of protection from exposure to the stress of transition. While this study did not examine the phenomenon of self-protection or even self-care, it is likely some of the actions of participants could be perceived as demonstrating such.

Implications for Practice and Research

First-generation college students comprise 34 percent nationally of first-time freshmen at four-year colleges (Choy, 2001; Engle, 2007). Nonetheless, these students graduate at lower rates than second- or continuing generation students. Scholars of higher education have explored many reasons for this difference, and this study contributes to that scholarship by examining the influence of working-class culture on transition. This work informs practice and research in the following ways.

Implications for Practice

- Virtual go-alongs using the common geospacial technologies of Google Earth and Google Street View can be employed by higher education practitioners to aid the transition process for new students. Faculty, student affairs practitioners, residence life staff, counseling centers professionals and academic advisors and coaches know that transition to college is fraught with many difficulties, including homesickness. A virtual go-along is one way to acknowledge that a student is leaving one space and entering a new one. Additionally, it is a way to visualize and open conversation about how foreign the campus can seem when compared to home. Most of all, a virtual go-along facilitates a bridge between the two spaces of home and college and validates a student's connection to home.

- Colleges and universities expend a great deal of time and money on transition programming, and much of this programming is intended to confront issues that may create angst for the first-year student – from managing time to making social connections. Colleges and universities should include outreach to first-generation students and develop intentional programming that acknowledges the cultural differences the student may experience. While the numbers of students supported by access and success organizations are increasing, there are many more unsupported students entering higher education. Colleges and universities should intentionally recognize that the student is embarking on a journey that will forever change them, making them different from their family. Orientation and first-year programming are opportunities to include this necessary outreach.

- Storytelling is central to academic advising. Through listening to the stories of advisees, faculty and professional advisors are able to make connections with students, provide prescriptive information, and offer developmental guidance. Appreciating the cultural differences associated with first-generations students from working-class backgrounds is imperative for deeper connections between student and advisor to emerge. The differences between natural and cultivated growth as presented by Lareau (2003) and between independence and interdependence as presented by Stephens et al. (2012) are two concepts that advisors understand and embrace in practice.

- Many higher education institutions have prioritized equity and inclusion efforts and addressed cultural competencies in those efforts. Because of the convoluted

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nature of social class, it is often left out of equity and inclusion discussions. Faculty and staff should receive instruction on how to bring social class more to the fore so they can help students navigate this transition just as higher education institutions have done with race and ethnicity.

- Colleges and universities should reframe their messaging about first-generation students from a deficit-based approach to a strengths-based approach. Yosso's (2005) model of cultural wealth should serve as a launching point for this discussion. Foremost among the strengths that colleges and universities should recognize is the family – immediate or extended -- or community support given to first-generation students. Developing ways to help students stay connected to home and acknowledging their bifurcated existence should impact retention and persistence for this group.

- Success organizations and affinity campus groups are essential and should be embraced as supplemental vehicles to help students with transition. It is important to continually recognize that one size does not fit all, and students will pick and choose affinity groups that feel comfortable to them. Making several options available is good practice, including first-generation groups along with racial and ethnic support groups.

- It is important for colleges and universities to continue focus on transition during the first year and create programming that is culturally responsive to those from working-class backgrounds just as they have done for students of color.

- More importantly, colleges and universities need to provide sustained attention

  this population to address cultural differences.

There are many more ways in which programming can be intentional and directed toward

the cultural transition for first-generation, low-income students. The above are low-cost,

high-impact options.

Implications for Research

Research for first-generation, low-income students has limitless options.

Repositioning away from the deficit model to a strengths-based model is would appear to

be a priority as this research is less prevalent. Additionally, there is relatively little

research about social class in higher education overall. Finally, the intersectionality of

social class and first-generation status offers much opportunity for higher education

researchers.

- Both the go-along or walking interview and the virtual go-along are

  methodologies that present a new frontier for higher education research. Harris's

  (2015) use of the methodology to explore campus climate for Students of Color

  opens the door to many applications for in-person qualitative research. Adding an

  alternative of virtual go-alongs exponentially increases opportunities in qualitative

  research. Sense of belonging, insider-outsider identity, cultural barrier crossers,

  and acculturation are a few topics that are suitable for employing the methodology

  of go-alongs or virtual go-alongs.

- This study did not interrogate intersectionality of identities with first-generation

  identity, although it was impossible to ignore the intersection of identities for the

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study participants in the findings. While racial and ethnic identity development layered with first-generation identity development provide many venues for research, immigrant identity as an intersectional identity could significantly inform practice for first-generation college students.

- The role of social class, an incredibly complex concept, requires greater examination. The way in which students experience their social class on the campus and in the classroom is crucial to understand. Equally important is in-depth understanding of how students evolve as they learn to straddle two different worlds.

- Dissonance has been cited as a reason for the lack of persistence among first-generation students. While this study looked at the initial shock of exposure to a new culture, a longitudinal study that follows a cohort of students would help identify the points at which the dissonance is greatest, thereby facilitating intervention.

- The exploration of individual agency within the context of social reproduction theory could interrogate how habitus, social capital and cultural capital evolve over a college career for first-generation students from working-class backgrounds. This research could inform practice of higher education professionals who are instrumental in retention and persistence work.

There are many theories that are widely applicable to research on first-generation college students; there are countless untapped opportunities related to social class and first-generation students.

Epilogue

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. T.S. Eliot

As a senior in high school, my favorite class was English. I remember reading *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S Eliot and feeling confident in my academic abilities. In many ways, Northwestern stripped me of that confidence. My journey to earning a doctorate has not been free of this same imposter syndrome; the inadequacy that plagued me as an undergraduate plagued me as a doctoral student. Self-doubt about intelligence and academic worthiness linger, often leaving me to question if I have anything to contribute to the scholarship of higher education. While the stories of the participants in my study are not my story, there are overlapping themes. In many ways, I am happy their lived experiences do not mirror my own, that they had mechanisms and people in place to provide the cultural capital I was so void of when I entered Northwestern. We do share a very strong connection, however. We will forever live in two worlds, and by entering into college, we fast become aware that our two selves will be difficult if not impossible to reconcile.

Vance (2016), in his book *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*, spoke to my own experience on many levels. While my childhood was not as tumultuous as the author's, I experienced the same worry about belonging when I landed at Northwestern as a freshman as Vance did when he landed at Yale as a law student. Vance wrote, "I had never felt out of place in my life" (p. 202). But he did at Yale, and I did at Northwestern. I learned to avoid talk of my family, except to mythologize them as hillbillies from the Ozarks; I became adept at avoiding specifics about my home or

background. Although it took me too many years to stop being ashamed of being a poor kid from the Ozarks, I never stopped loving my heritage, my home, or my family, and I never stopped drawing strength from my hillbilly habitus. I now can articulate the strengths I have because I grew up in a working-class family. To this day, I yearn for the home of my childhood. Vance (2016) aptly articulates this inner conflict of being from the working-class and moving into the middle class culture of higher education.

> It wasn't just about the money or my relative lack of it. It was about people's perceptions. Yale made me feel, for the first time in my life, that others viewed my life with intrigue. Professors and classmates seemed genuinely interested in what seemed to me as superficially boring story: I went to a mediocre pubic high school, my parents didn't go to college, and I grew up in Ohio. That was true of nearly everyone I know. At Yale, these things were true of no one. (p. 204)

The conflict of becoming an outsider from our homes and families by attending college is only matched by the conflict of questioning whether we belong in the middle class at all.

I will always identify as a first-generation college student from a working-class family in the Ozarks; I cannot change nor would I want to change my heritage. I now live solidly in the middle class, and I have adopted all that comes with that social class, as my education alone confirms. My children were raised with privilege – habitus, cultural capital and social capital – that I did not possess when I went to college. Yet each time I return "home" to the Ozarks as an adult, I am back in that cultural world: my language changes, my dress changes, and my discourse changes. I am, in many ways, the embodiment of a bicultural individual.

As I reflect on my experience, the image that repeatedly comes to mind is a spiral staircase firmly grounded in cement. College and graduate education helped me ascend that staircase to the middle class, yet my foundation as a low-income, first-generation student from a working-class background has never left me. Although my view changes the higher I climb the staircase, my foundation remains solid and unchanged. It took me many years to appreciate the strength of that foundation. I can only hope that this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the transition experience for first-generation, low-income students from working class backgrounds. It is imperative that we recognize their individual journeys, acknowledge the inherent conflict of living in two worlds, and embrace the strength of their foundation, their habitus.

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Full name:_____

2. Alias (for research reporting):_____

3. College or university attending:_____ Major: _____

4. Home address: _____

5. Please indicate who you live with; check all that apply.
     Mom only _____ Dad only _____Both parents _____
     Other; please list all:
     _____
     _____

6. Number of siblings: _____
     Total brothers: _____Older:_____ Younger:_____ Half:_____ Step:_____
     Total sisters :_____Older :_____Younger:_____ Half:_____Step:_____

7. What is your racial and ethnic identity:
Racial identity/identities:_____
Ethnic identity/identities: _____

8. What is your current age (in years): _____

9. Please write in your gender or preferred gender identity: _____

10. Please write in the occupation (work outside the home) for each member of your household:
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. Has anyone else in your family attended college? Yes: ___ No__
     If yes, who:_____
     Where: _____

     If yes, who:_____
     Where: _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 1)

Habitus:
1.　　How do you describe your "family?"
2.　　Can you describe a typical gathering of your family?
3.　　What would you say are the most important values your family passed along to you?
4.　　What would you say are the most important beliefs your family passed along to you?
5.　　What kind of work do members of your family members perform?
6.　　How were your friends' families? Were they similar to yours?
7.　　How would you consider or describe your social class?
8.　　Can you describe any early memories where you compared your social class to others?

First-generation identity:
1.　　How was education talked about in your family?
2.　　Can you describe your family's involvement during your elementary or high school education?
3.　　What are your earliest memories, if any, of discussions about college?
4.　　Who influenced you the most to attend college? How did they influence you?
5.　　People come to college for many different reasons. Why are you in college?
6.　　What does it mean to you to be first to attend college?
7.　　What does it mean to your family that you are in college?

Transition:
1.　　First-year students can have a variety of experiences when they transition to college, particularly when they come from many different backgrounds. Thinking back to fall, what was the transition to college like for you?
2.　　Please tell me about a time when you faced an obstacle when you came to college. How did you resolve it?
3.　　Please tell me about a time when you felt you didn't really belong here?
4.　　How would you describe how your classroom experience overall?
　　　　　(Probe language use by professor, context of subject content, etc.)
5.　　Can you describe your involvement on campus?
6.　　Tell me about your weekends?
7.　　How often do you go home?
8.　　Have you found others "like you" on campus?
9.　　What differences do you notice among your peers on campus who are not first-generation and you?

Biculturalism:
1. How did your decision to attend college affect your relationships with your family at home?
2. How do you talk to your family about your courses or college life?
3. How did your decision to attend college affect your relationships with your friends?
4. Can you describe any differences in the way you act around friends at home and around friends at college?
5. What are some past experiences that prepared you to succeed in college?
6. Some first-generation students talk about living in two worlds once they start college – the world of home and the world of school. Do you ever feel this way?
7. Can you describe some of those differences between home and school?
8. Can you describe anything in particular that has changed about you since starting college?
9. What would you advise other students with backgrounds similar to your own about transitioning to college?
10. If you could choose four words to describe what it is like to be a first-generation college student, what would those be?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 2)

Thank you for letting me visit you this summer. I really enjoyed seeing your neighborhood and getting a sense of your home culture.

Last spring, we spoke about your family and class background, your transition to college, and your relationships back home. I wanted to follow up and see how things were going this semester – now that you are a second-year college student – and I wanted to revisit some of our discussion from the spring now that you spent a few months back home.

1. What stands out most about your summer?
2. Can you describe your relationship with your family or if it was the same as before your first year of college?
3. How did you talk to your family about your courses or college life?
4. Can you describe your relationships with your friends or if they were the same as before your first year of college?
5. How did you talk about college to your friends at home?
6. Please describe any differences in the way you acted around friends at home over the summer and friends at college? [probe language]
7. In the spring, we talked about first-generation students describing living in two worlds once they start college – the world of home and the world of school. Can you identify a time you felt like you were living in two worlds over the summer at home?
8. What stands out the most when you compare spending time at home and spending time at college? [probe values and beliefs]
9. What were your feelings about returning to college this fall?
10. Can you talk about where you feel most comfortable – home or college?
11. During the first interview during the spring, I asked you to give me four words that describe how it feels to be a first-generation college student. Can you, again, give me four words and why you chose these words?
12. Is there anything you feel as if you would like to say about being a first-generation college student that I've not asked you, especially as it might relate to your home culture and that of college?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Introduction and Contact Information
You are asked to take part in a research project that examines the ways in which students who are first in their family to attend college (first-generation) experience the cultural transition to college.

The researcher is LaDonna L. Bridges, doctoral candidate in the higher education program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, LaDonna Bridges will discuss them with you. Her telephone number is 508-579-8767 and email is ladonna.bridges001@umb.edu.

Description of the Project:
This study seeks to develop a better understanding of how participants Participants will be asked to share their experiences from their own educational backgrounds that have influenced their decisions to pursue careers in higher education, including but not limited to experiences with family members, teachers, educators, mentors, and advisors. Participants will be asked questions about their own educational experiences as students as well as their transition into doctoral education.

Participation in this study will be approximately 2 hours plus an informal visit over the summer, and it will be completed in two phases (approximately 1 hour each session). Interviews will be conducted in-person.

Risks or Discomforts:
You may speak with LaDonna Bridges, doctoral candidate, to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you wish to discuss concerns with a professor in the program, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Dwight Giles, Jr., Professor of Higher Education, University of Massachusetts Boston at Dwight.giles@umb.edu who serves as the faculty advisor and dissertation chair for this study.

Risks or discomfort may include experiences of discomfort or distress that may arise as a result of discussing transition to college as a first-generation student. .

Confidentiality and Anonymity:
Your part in this research is **confidential**. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked electronic file that is password protected and only the research team will have access to the data. This data will be destroyed no later than August 2016.

To protect your anonymity, the information collected will not include information that specifically identifies you such as your name or telephone number. Upon completion of

your interview, a pseudonym will be assigned to you and you will from that point on only be referred to by your pseudonym.

Voluntary Participation:
The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should directly contact LaDonna Bridges by phone, 508-579-8767, or by email, ladonna.bridges001@umb.edu. Whatever you decide will in no way penalize you.

Rights:
You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach LaDonna Bridges, doctoral candidate, at ladonna.bridges001@umb.edu or her dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Dwight Giles, Jr., at Dwight.giles@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5374 or at human.participants@umb.edu.

Signatures:

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Signature of Researcher   Date

_____

Printed Name of Researcher

APPENDIX E: AUDIORECORDING CONSENT FORM

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape (videotape) or the transcript. Only the researcher team will be able to listen to the recording.

The recording will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

By signing this form you are consenting to (INCLUDE ONLY THOSE OPTIONS THAT ARE BEING USED):

❑   having your interview recorded;

❑   having the tape transcribed;

❑   use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the recording erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study.

This consent for recording is effective until the following date: <u>Aug. 1, 2016</u>. On or before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature _____Date_____

Middle-Class Pattern: Parental Values for Children	Working-Class Pattern: Parental Values for Children
Self-control	Obedience
Consideration of others	Manners
Curiosity	"Good student"
Happiness	Neatness, cleanliness
Parents' Own Value Orientations	Parents' Own Value Orientations
Tolerance of nonconformity	Strong punishment for deviant behavior
Open to innovation	Stuck to old ways
People basically good	People not trustworthy
Value self-direction	Believe in strict leadership
Job Characteristics	Job Characteristics
Work independently	Close supervision
Varied tasks	Repetitive work
Work with people or data	Work with things

Table 1: Typical Class Patterns in Parental Values and Occupations. Adapted from "Socialization, Association, Lifestyles, and Values," by Gilbert, p. 103. *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality* (8th ed.). Copyright 2011 by Pine Forge Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Participant	*Custodial Parent*	*Institutional Type*	*Race/Ethnicity/Immigrant Status*	*Gender*
Anna	Both	Private	Asian American/ Immigrant Parents	Female
Fili	Father	Public	African/Foreign-born Immigrant	Female
Jay	Mother	Private	African American	Male
Karley	Mother	Public	African American	Female
Kimberlye	Father	Public	Haitian/Foreign-born Immigrant	Female
Mackenzie	Both	Private	Asian American/ Immigrant Parents	Female
Michelle	Mother	Public	African American	Female
Neymar	Mother	Public	Cape Verdean/Foreign-born Immigrant	Male

Table 2: Study Participants' Demographic Profiles.

Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Attribute	Application to Study	Participant's Demonstration of Attribute
Aspirations Capital: Ability to keep hopes and dreams alive and to remain resilient in face of obstacles.	Participants and their families viewed higher education as way to a better life.	*Fili:* "I'm trying to sacrifice myself, work hard, do what I have to do to make my future better, and at least not only even for myself, I think about my mom. At least I will take care of her if I have a good job."
Linguistics Capital: Communication skills in different languages are an asset.	Five of the participants were bilingual or multilingual, and many of them bridged language barriers and served as translators for their families.	*Mackenzie:* "I try to translate some things for them so it's a little easier – because in Vietnamese some things are a little different than it is in English – and so I try to say things in a certain way so it's easier for them to understand…."
Familial Capital: Immediate or extended families create a sense of community and support.	Most of the participants in this study relayed stories of extended family and some spoke of offering support to or receiving support from that extended family; each participant recognized his contribution to the family in the long-term with a college education.	*Michelle:* "If I walk in, if it's a family event, if it's Thanksgiving and I see all the women in the kitchen, it's like wow! When the women are together, it's better.
Navigational Capital: Ability to maneuver in racially-biased institutions – educational or otherwise – that privilege Whites.	Both the private university and the public university in this study were predominantly White institutions; all the study participants attended high schools that were predominantly students of color.	*Anna:* "I feel like at [private university], a lot of my peers come from wealthier backgrounds than me. When I first came here, it was culture shock too because I grew up in the inner city. A lot of my peers were a lot

		different from this. There was more diversity. Here, there's not as much diversity and social classes – it ranges far."
Resistance Capital: Beyond resilience in the face of adversity, this cultural wealth gives students of color the skills necessary to enter the world with exceptional problem-solving abilities.	Resilience is not something the participants in my study gained through the college experience but rather something they possessed upon entering.	*Jay:* "I know how to code-switch from talking at home to talking to the attorneys to talking with professors. I feel like it's different, but it's not a challenge, I don't think, because I'm so used to code-switching."

Table 3. Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model Application.

APPENDIX I: CODES AND SUBCODES

HABITUS
    Description of family
    Early education
    Family values
    Family work
    Social class

FIRST-GENERATION IDENTITY
    Completing college
    Early talk of college
    Cost of college

TRANSITION
    Change in relationships with friends
    Change in relationships with family
    Sense of belonging
    Dissonance

BICULTURALISM
    Living in two worlds
    Others like you

ACADEMIC/CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE
    Academic preparedness

SUPPORT
    Family support

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

GREAT QUOTES

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