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STRUGGLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS: EXPERIENCES OF WORKING-CLASS WHITE
MALE ACADEMICS WHO ATTAIN TENURE

by

Galen C. Reddin

<u>An Abstract</u>

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy and Leadership
Studies in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Co-Supervisors: Associate Professor Emeritus Scott McNabb
Associate Professor Carolyn Wanat

ABSTRACT

This study investigated a little known topic: the experiences of working-class white male professors who have attained tenure. Academics who have immigrated from working-class backgrounds have reported experiences of navigating culturally confusing interactions within their professional settings, even years after their class migrations. Working-class white male tenured academics were selected for the present study in order to ascertain findings intended to contribute to understandings of their pre-tenure social class-related experiences and strategies they believed most significant for tenure attainment.

Ethnographic research methods were employed in this study. Research questions guiding the study were: "What do first-generation white male college professors identify as the key factors which helped them achieve tenure?" and, "To what extent did their class background help or hinder the process?" The data analysis chapter divides participants' experiences into three themes: Theme 1 addresses some of the formal and informal social contexts of the tenure process. Themes 2 and 3 focus on the participants' psychological and social challenges and successes that were also part of the process.

This study analyzed data regarding social contexts that participants believed were relevant to their tenure attainment. Participants experienced academic culture in ways connected to important issues of diversity and exclusion found in the literature on the experiences of other, more traditionally recognized marginalized groups in American higher education. Seemingly routine work-related events often transpired according to unwritten social rules informed by academic culture. Most participants reported significant cultural outsider experiences, although they also experienced culturally-based challenges to success, they gradually developed strategies

that incorporated working-class knowledge into their pre-tenure phases in ways they believed constituted unique professional strengths.

Findings were generalized in four statements: most participants experienced social-class related struggles toward gaining tenure attainment; most participants entered academia without adequate cultural knowledge; most participants experienced academic work and social practices as contentious with their working-class sensibilities; and most participants gradually developed internal truces between their past and present cultural orientations toward their eventual goal of tenure attainment. Directions for future study and concluding thoughts are also included.

Abstract Approved: _____
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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Galen C. Reddin

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Education Policy and Leadership Studies at the May 2012
graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
                        Scott McNabb, Co-Supervisor

                    _____
                        Carolyn Wanat, Co-Supervisor

                    _____
                        Marcus Haack

                    _____
                        David Bills

                    _____
                        Bruce Fehn

For Mary

If your life is one marked by lower education attainment, lower income, and lower class, you are less likely to be considered an expert about anything, even your own life. While you may be able to explain what's hard about getting health care when you have no insurance, your plight will be used as an illustration and explained by an expert. A low-status person is raw material; a higher-status person is given the job of providing context, sketching the big picture, describing the systemic challenges of being a lower-status individual.

Ray Suarez
Holding Up a Mirror to a Classless Society

I am two people.
Alfred Lubrano
Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

<u>Background</u>

Institutions of American higher education and the professions in general have a history of being operated by middle and upper class white males. In recent years there has been an effort to diversify the ranks of leadership in the professions, including the ranks of professors at colleges and universities, and there have been many studies of the experiences of women (Bronstein & Farnsworth, 1998; Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Rausch et al, 1989; Tokarczyk & Fay,1993) and minorities in these institutions (Christopher, 2005; Knowles & Harleston, 1997; Orbe, 2004; Russo & Linkon, 2005; Schmidt, 2004; Washington & Harvey, 1989). Lareau (2008) has encouraged more research into the experiences of an additional group: individuals who have migrated from working-class backgrounds and hold middle-class occupations:

> [W]hole swaths of social life that are probably associated with social class are missing from nationally representative data sets. Indeed, some topics are well worn, while others are virtually absent from discussion. To mention just one example, our understanding of the feelings of pain and exclusion that can be connected to upward mobility is not particularly deep (Lareau, 2008, p. 9).

Little research exists that focuses on the experiences of a specific subgroup of individuals residing within the general label of upwardly mobile: first-generation white male professors, who are not from the ranks of the middle and upper classes. They face real obstacles in the sense that, similar to the experiences of women and minorities, academia is, for individuals from the working-class, foreign cultural territory.

Working-class white males in academia constitute a social category that has received comparatively little scholarly interest yet warrants recognition as a legitimate group for study in social inequalities. The methodology section describes how this study focuses on participants'

struggles and accomplishments in route to their tenure attainment according to their own perspectives. This study has been an opportunity to learn more about social class issues in the American professoriate, and raise new questions for future investigations. In this sense, the inquiry is influenced by Muzzatti & Samarco (2006), co-editors and contributors to an anthology on first-generation college academics:

> [T]his volume, is not about us or other working-class academics, whatever their number, being special—gifted mutants wholly unlike those who grew up around them. Rather, it's about opening up a space, a space where we and others like us can articulate what we've been feeling for some time: that class matters (Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006, p. xiii).

Situating the study within individual experiences is appropriate. In order to pursue the research questions, I gathered and analyzed data concerning the ways working-class white male professors believed their social class backgrounds operated in their tenure attainment (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

Previous research using quantitative methods has concluded that significant differences based on social class constitute unique barriers to career success for first-generation participants in post-secondary education institutions (Grimes & Morris, 1997), and some of these studies have recommended the appropriateness of qualitative methods for investigating success outcomes (Kniffin, 2007; Zweig, 2004). For instance, Lareau (2008) suggested that, "[I]t is hard for surveys to be sufficiently nuanced on this point," and scholars in addition to Renny Christopher (2005) have suggested addressing class-related inequalities from the standpoint of experience (Benmayor, 2002; Christopher, 2005; Wilson, 2006).

Prior to discussing the experiences of these individuals, this chapter introduces some problems often encountered by researchers studying social class issues. Then the chapter addresses a few misconceptions about issues related to social class as well as some popular

misunderstandings about the working-class. Finally, the present study's orientation to social class analysis is introduced along with an overview of the remaining chapters.

<u>Problems with Studying Social Class</u>

The literature on social class is somewhat comparable to a group quilting project in which few quilters are adequately communicating; scholars working in similar areas have not been engaging in sufficient dialogue (Lareau, 2008). For instance, the literature exhibits inconsistencies in terminology and definitional criteria. Lareau (2008) speculates that this may be the result of different definitions of class necessitated by the nature of a given researcher's purpose and topic focus (Lareau, 2008).

Lingering Misconceptions

This section first addresses three class-based misconceptions operating in mainstream American culture: that all Americans have equal chances for life successes; that American culture encompasses a predominantly professional-managerial-class orientation; and, some common misperceptions of the working-class.

A prominent misconception spans social class boundaries: Americans tend to see themselves as interacting within a politically equitable environment (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002) and as such often attribute individual success to merit or innate abilities (O'Dair, 1993; Webb et al, 2002). However, such beliefs cloud the significance of how social backgrounds influence life success chances. As cited by Webb and her colleagues (2002), Bourdieu states, "Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games…are not fair games…without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 214-215). From this perspective, personal striving for success, regardless of abilities and effort, will be futile without favorable

social circumstances. As cited by Ryan & Sackrey (1984), one's "life chances," as Ralf

Dahrendorf has called them, are "opportunities for individual growth, for the realization of

talents, wishes and hopes." Such possibilities presuppose optimal social conditions (Ryan &

Sackrey, 1984, p. 22).

Another misconception has to do with erroneous portrayals of the working-class in the

mainstream culture. Ehrenreich (1995) argues that in the last three decades of the 20th century,

the working-class has been a frequent target onto which the middle and upper classes have

projected notions of gauche taste, chauvinism, racism, and hegemonic thinking (O'Dair, 1993).

For instance, Charles Sackrey comments that much of his own research encountered a common

perception of the working-class as "dumb" (Lubrano, 2004). Through his professional

experiences as a news journalist, Suarez (2008) states a social-class bias is operating in the mass

media. In particular, Suarez describes and critiques television news journalism for reporting

events in ways that manipulate definitions and images of the working-class:

> When the guys at the loading dock buy one Powerball ticket and split an $80
> million jackpot, reporters chronicle in loving detail the life choices the
> winners are about to make: whether or not they keep their job; whether or not
> they plan to move; what kind of boat they are going to buy. Without ever
> saying it, the grinning anchorwoman and the reporter live from the scene
> jocularly describe a rich low-class person. A winner's authenticity is
> praised—having money will not change him or her.
> I would love to see the face on one of these grinning, college-educated, six-
> figure-earning faux regular guys if the jackpot winner said, "Please, leave me
> alone, and if you come to my house, I will call the police." Or if the winner
> said, "I'm going to get my teeth fixed, and I'm going to pay off my mortgage
> and go to college. And I'm not taking any further questions" (Suarez, 2008,
> pp. 362-363).

O'Dair (1993) communicates similar views in her description of academic settings:

"…in the thinking of some colleagues I find a bizarre contradiction, the kind of contradiction Ehrenreich isolates in the professional middle-class as a whole:" Here, O'Dair incorporates a quote of Ehrenreich (1990) into her point:

> 'Enlightened' people, who might flinch at a racial slur, have no trouble listing the character defects of an ill-defined 'underclass,' defects which routinely include ignorance, promiscuity, and sloth…its habits unhealthful; and its views are hopelessly bigoted and parochial (Ehrenreich, 1990, p 7; O' Dair, 1993, p. 243-244).

In sum, these writers and scholars describe how the working-class has been, and continues to be, "a public dumping ground" (O'Dair, 1993).

Finally, some arguments have been forwarded in support of studying class in conjunction with other sociological considerations. Some scholars have argued that studying women, minority, or class issues exclusively, inevitably overlooks crucial ways in which these areas are inextricably entwined into complex systems of inequality (Lacy & Harris, 2008; Lareau, 2008; Pattillo, 2008; Zweig, 2009). Alternatively, Leslie McCall is among a number of other scholars who argue that in some cases, studies of one marginalized group can lead to increased understandings of others (McCall, 2008). Although studies in areas such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation are obviously important, such realities do not diminish the importance of studying class (Russo, 2005). For instance, Carpiano, Link & Phelan (2008), quoted a claim by Paula Bravemen (2005) that I am in agreement with: "The question is not: 'Is race or class more important?'" Rather, focusing on inequalities while failing to address social class obstructs understandings of the ways social background influences life chances (Carpiano, Link & Phelan, 2008. p. 256; Braveman, 2005).

The Present Study's Orientation to Social Class Analysis

The present study discusses social class as identifiable traits and shared ways that members experience and make sense out of social interactions. Thus, cultural knowledge refers to individuals' definitions and meanings of social interactions that were learned from their social class background. This approach to social class *as* culture is further significant because individuals' social orientations strongly influence chances for life success (Bourdieu, 1990; Martin, 2006, Piper, 1995; Lareau, 2008).

> [T]he working-class and PMC [professional-managerial class] encompass fundamental differences in perceptions of and approaches to daily living. PMC backgrounds emphasize planning and preparation for the future. The PMC home generally focuses on gaining forms of capital that will maximize possibilities of publicly defined successes and achievements. Connected to this, the PMC identity is nurtured in direct relationship to achievement. Working-class backgrounds emphasize immediate, "here-and-now" sensibilities. This seems reasonable when survival is frequently equated with making it to the next paycheck (Jensen, 2004, p. 174).

Stated another way, within conventionally labeled marginalized groups, individuals can differ according to additional criteria that can differentiate them in terms of life success outcomes, such as family occupational and educational backgrounds (Kniffin, 2007; Rogoff et al, 2008). Rogoff argues that research that identifies people strictly according to race or ethnicity has often presumed that such group identifications are based on a number of traits that researchers have assumed as "typical." One problem with such assumptions is that not all individuals identified according to conventionally accepted group referent labels necessarily experience either stable or similar social circumstances throughout their lives. As such, class should be reexamined in terms of, as Cerulo (1996) is cited by MacKinnon & Heise (2010), "…identifiable differences in competencies [that] are delineating factors of social class

[and]…constitute real differences that separate individuals" (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010, p. 28; Goodenough 1965; Leste-Law, 1995).

> Social class is one aspect of professional socialization and identity politics. Class is deeply interwoven with other formative elements of society—race, gender… and we see class as the element that is often least explored and most difficult to understand… (Russo & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12).

The present study also explores perceptions of class, given American universities' well-intended but limited notions of diversity. Compared to the important studies in areas of women and minorities, developments in social-class studies run far behind. Beyond the comparative paucity of literature, on most American campuses, the lack of courses and programs devoted to social class is striking (Russo & Lincoln, 2005). In addition, the overwhelming majority of academia's population of women and minority academics are from professional-managerial-class backgrounds (O'Dair, 1993). One assumption is that working-class identities are somehow a matter of choice rather than externally imposed social circumstances.

> [O]ne's class identity is and is expected to be much less obvious, especially at the university where wealthy students dress in ragged jeans and poorer students inconspicuously work twenty or thirty hours a week, "part-time" in order to be able to afford the same academic life funded, in the rich kids' cases, by Daddy (Overall, 1995, p. 214).

So, in-line with the previous scholars, Overall (1995) argues that social class identity is essential, it is shaped by a particular existence; that social backgrounds shape the ways individuals make sense of their social world and their place in it. As such, individuals' behaviors are based on beliefs of realistic options. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Charlip, 1995; Langston, 1993; Overall, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). In this sense class is misconstrued as a constructed identity whenever it is defined according to superficial characteristics, such as aesthetic and leisure-related lifestyle preferences (Overall, 1995). Working-class academic Leste-Law's (1995) quote illustrates this reasoning: "We do not cease being men and women… But, most of us [are

assumed to] cease being working-class when we become professors" (Leste-Law, 1995). And Overall (1995) concurs though more personalized language: "The phenomena associated with sexism are not adequate to account fully for my discomfort within the academic community" (Overall, 1995, p. 212).

Rationale for the Study

Within social class studies one group has received very little attention: first-generation tenured white male college professors. Academics from working-class backgrounds in general have reported unique experiences of navigating culturally confusing interactions within their professional settings, even years after their class migrations. However, "…few studies capture these feelings of unease in a sophisticated fashion" (Lareau, 2008, p. 9). Researchers including Casey (2005) also claims that the same benefits that have resulted from gender and ethnic diversity will be achieved when diversity is articulated along specific measures of socioeconomic background (Benton, 2007; Casey, 2005; Christopher, 2005; Christopher, Orr, & Strom, 1998; Finkelstein, Seal, &, Schuster, 1998; Fussell, 1983; Lee Linkon, 1999; Muzzatti &, Samarco, 2006; Oldfield et al, 2006; O'Malley, Rosen & Vogt, 1990; Shepard, McMillan, & Tate, 1998; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002; Zandy, 2001).

Research Questions

The literature review is one story about first-generation academics' understandings of their professional situations. It discusses first-generation college academics' experiences regarding class differences in cultural capital along with misunderstandings about these differences, as well as feelings of impostorship. Later, the literature review discusses how first-generation academics' attempts at trial and error approaches often fail to account for background differences. Later, positive aspects of their professional lives will be introduced. The literature

review concludes by noting that these various issues have also been experienced in combinations. That is, first-generation academics have encountered these issues, both good and not-so-good, in different mixtures and settings. The research questions are:

- What do first-generation white male college professors identify as the key factors which helped them achieve tenure?

- To what extent did their class background help or hinder the process?

<u>Limitations of the Study</u>

Given that this study is situated within a phenomenological perspective, it is limited in its context. For instance, it is most likely the case that specific issues within its findings might be reasonably inferred to be connected with other settings, but not in terms of generalizability. In addition, the researcher's background is a significant issue and is discussed in the methodology section.

This study is also limited by its research design. Findings are limited to the subjective views of the participants because only interview data was used. This study did not use additional data acquired by other methods, and thus was unable to triangulate the interview data with other data.

However, the methods chapter also discusses how the overwhelming majority of interview data was gathered in contexts wherein participants talked spontaneously at length on many issues; they displayed clear, strong motivations to express their views. Further, given the content and tenor of many of the views expressed in the data I ascertained very little evidence of the Hawthorne effect threatening the data's trustworthiness.

Two additional contextual limitations may exist in this study. The first may be the fact that a notable number of participants stated that their initial encounters with and matriculations

through educational institutions were significantly due to military-related education initiatives such as the GI Bill. Finally, due to a number of resource limitations, all interview data is based on single, roughly one-hour interviews with each participant.

<u>Overview of the Chapters</u>

Chapter II's review of the literature was constructed according to a logic that selected issues most common in the literature and also most likely connected to the present study's participants. Due to the extreme paucity in the literature on white male working-class academics, this literature review traverses specific and most-written-about experiences of working-class academics, most of whom share other social group identifications such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and nationality. The literature review draws these issues together in an attempt to tie them in with the research question.

The third, methods chapter discusses the present study's methodological considerations: research design, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and a pilot study. The present study's findings are discussed in chapter IV. This chapter describes the interview data along three themes: how interviewees struggled to learn academia's unwritten rules; perceived differences between themselves and most of their colleagues; and strategies they developed toward eventual tenure attainment.

In Chapter V findings are grouped according to four statements: most participants experienced struggles related to social class, in gaining tenure; most participants entered academia without adequate cultural knowledge; most participants experienced academic work and socially-related practices as contentious with their working-class sensibilities; and all participants gradually strategized internal truces between their past and present cultural

orientations toward their eventual goal of tenure. Chapter V includes a discussion on directions

for future study and ends with a section containing my concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A fair amount of the literature is discussed in terms of its indirect connections with the present study's topic. Although most of the issues discussed originated in literature on first-generation academics, references to white males in particular are often relegated to an occasional, autobiographical anecdote. The chapter's specific issues follow first-generation academics' experiences with and gradual adjustments to academic culture. The first issue commonly encountered along their professional paths is the impostor phenomenon. Later, the chapter moves to discoveries of various conflicts between the reward systems they grew up with and those of the professoriate. The chapter then turns its attention to common problematic responses that first-generation academics often tried or considered. Finally, after some positive accounts of their journeys are discussed, a few existing specifics in the literature closest to the present study's research questions are discussed.

Entering Unfamiliar Workplace Cultures

In 1984, two academics from working-class backgrounds published a foundational study that focused on individuals who, like themselves, had encountered class differences that played important factors in their careers. One of Ryan and Sackrey's key points for the present study is that social class is a feeling of belonging to a group of people who share identifiable cultural experiences (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). They discussed class as culture in the sense that our backgrounds shape thinking and perceptions. Their work and that of subsequent researchers pursued various questions regarding first-generation college academics as an important group for study by virtue of their unique cultural existence. The general picture is that these individuals are

unfamiliar with the unwritten rules and expectations that come with the role of college professor (Cerulo, 1997; Goodenough, 1965; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010).

<u>A Structural Perspective</u>

The following passages provide some detail of the structural perspective that I use in the present study. Each social class will be discussed as social settings in which familiarity with the culture is a matter of shared knowledge that is so familiar to members it often operates invisibly (Jensen, 2004; Miner, 1993). In addition, most academics from the working-class encounter academic culture within a number of alienating social contexts. First, Americans from all social classes often assume that academic success is largely dependent on merit and innate abilities. Such assumptions often complicate working-class individuals' attempts at gaining structural understandings of their success attempts; they operate in complex ways via their interplay with the next point: from the perspective of academic contexts, working-class knowledge is often not identified as such; instead it is identified or distinguished as evidence of inferior competencies (Collins, 2002).

> Cultural capital differences and prejudicial reactions to usage of working-class complicate academic success, perhaps most troublesomely in the sense that these class-based differences in capital are perceived by both the professional middle class and working class academics as some form of lack of professional competencies (Jensen, 2004. pp. 177-178).

Through the interplay of these factors, academic culture can invisibly function to perpetuate or affirm its own culture's relevance (Martin, 2006; Piper, 1995) while simultaneously, from a working-class perspective, operate in ways that can deny or invalidate working-class knowledge and identities. For instance, Curry (2002) describes her experiences as "[a way of legitimizing] being under circumstances that favor the privileged" (Curry, 2002. p. 119). Specifically, when cultural newcomers such as working-class individuals enter academic

contexts they can experience situations that require them to rationalize or explain their behaviors. Such contexts are, in effect, pressures to conform to the culture. Martin (2006) uses the term "social location" in his description of the centrality of professional-managerial-class culture in academia:

> The answer has to do with social location. Those born into upper-middle-class families who end up assuming positions of power and privilege are simply reproducing an institutional order…within which their own occupancy is viewed as normative (Martin, 2006. p. 137).

Stated another way, educational institutions operate in ways that validate certain kinds of persons and knowledge (Meyer, 1977; O'Dair, 1995). O'Dair describes academia and part of her professional function as that of "…distinguish[ing] and separate[ing] according to social class…" (O'Dair 1995. p. 203).

The remaining major portion of the literature review uses this structural perspective as it discusses some of the most commonly documented issues encountered by working-class academics along their professional trajectories. The first key issues will be feelings of impostorship, and problems with conflicting rewards systems.

<u>The Impostor Phenomenon</u>

Any casual perusal of the social science literatures on upwardly mobile individuals from marginalized groups will reveal information on the impostor phenomenon, sometimes called the impostor syndrome. These terms refer to the feelings of cultural alienation, role confusion, and an often accompanying erosion of self-confidence (Berry, 2006; Cerulo, 1997; Clance, Dingman, Reviere, & Stober 1995; Goodenough 1965; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Rothe, 2006; Webb et al, 2002). Lubrano (1994) interviewed a diverse sample of first-generation, college educated individuals who attained white-collar positions spanning a wide range of occupations and he asserted that among all his interviewees:

> Professors are the most self-conscious…many of them working with middle-class colleagues who don't understand them, all the while teaching mostly middle-class kids how to become the bosses of their parents, siblings, and cousins, and childhood friends (Lubrano, 1994, pp. 2-3).

Clance and her colleagues (1995) have done extensive research on experiences of impostorship in upwardly mobile women. One of their claims has been that working-class belief systems and identities can operate in ways that complicate their chances of recognizing their feelings of alienation as symptomatic of impostorship (Brookfield, 1995; Cannon, 2006; Clance, Dingman, Reviere & Stober, 1995). Clance and her colleagues further suspected that this could account for a number of behaviors that the present study investigates, such as tendencies to not ask for help (Clance, et al., 1995). Subsequent researchers describe additional findings including feelings of fraudulence (Koch, 2002; McIntosh, 1985), and the need to emulate mainstream male faculty (Collay, 2002).

An important commonality among most first-generation academics is the initial, and for some, ongoing struggles with internalizing some of the personas associated with the role of college professor (Rothe, 2006). In particular, being comfortable with emanating self-assuredness, seeing themselves as rightful equals among colleagues, and at times feeling comfortable with exercising their various forms of authority that accompany being an academic.

> Feelings of "belonging" to hierarchies of power are often difficult to internalize. We know however that, while stories emerge of people who were unaccountably anxious when being praised or inexplicably nervous when receiving recognition, these feelings are much more prevalent among those individuals who did not grow up with a sense of entitlement to public sphere success (Koch, 2002, pp. 108-109).

Many first-generation academics have also reported difficulties with gaining a sense of ease with work-related social interactions. One underlying reason pertains to a key aspect of academic culture: it encompasses characteristics intended to keep the profession attractive when

compared to other, higher paying occupations within the professional-managerial-class. For example, the content of verbal interactions can serve to lend a positive mystique to the life of the mind in such things as exhibitions of refined tastes and preferences in lifestyles, (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). However, some of these cultural contexts have proved alienating. Casual conversation topics among colleagues frequently draw attention to background-based differences in access to and experiences with resources (Wilson, 2006). The following account by Jenson (2004) serves as a good illustration:

> Once when I was talking to a professor in his office, another professor leaned in the doorway and said, "I just heard a new excuse for missing an exam. A student said he couldn't come in today because he had to move a trailer house." The professor to whom I was talking laughed and replied, "That's one I never heard before, I guess it tells you you're really at a blue-collar college." Part of me liked being privy to this exchange. I took it to mean I was being treated as an insider. But I also sympathized with the student. It made sense to me that you might have to miss an exam to move a trailer house. What was funny about that? (Jensen, 2004, p. 178).

These and other conversations underscore background differences in disposable income, and moreover, the attendant differences in lifestyles often leave first-generation academics feeling isolated or inferior. The literature also includes connected accounts wherein newcomers reported feeling uncomfortable with taking advantage of subsidizing sources for work-related activities. Although they are now academics, it can be difficult to shake the old, frugal habits developed out of the necessity to survive to the next paycheck. Even though they may be no longer in such circumstances, some can be reticent to engage in what seems extravagant and wasteful uses of resources.

> For the upper-middle or upper-class academic, travel to exotic places, for example, has probably been a way of life. Those of us with working-class roots are not likely to be well traveled. When colleagues talk about previous or future trips overseas, we feel alienated from this experience. Even if we reach a time in our career when our salary would allow such travel, there may be hesitancy to take advantage of it (Wilson, 2006, p. 159-169).

Given these outsider experiences, reasonable questions can arise as to how these individuals respond. Silence is one of their most commonly reported reactions to culturally disquieting experiences. This is often the case in formal work settings, such as faculty meetings (Tokarczyk, 1993). Some working-class academics have also been reticent to discuss their lives outside of academe, for instance topics of family background (Long, Jenkins, & Bracken, 2000). However, in a few areas of the literature, silence has been discussed differently. That is, as acts of resistance. Within this context, O'Dair (1995) states, "I have refused to memorize and then recite lines of literature in conversation with colleagues, finding it too smooth, too genteel, a part of the role to resist" (O'Dair, 1995, pp. 200-208).

<div align="center">Conflicting Rewards Systems</div>

Working-class-based views on work itself have often conflicted with those of academic culture. The term "antagonistic" has been used in the sense that, "…academics for the most part live in a different world of culture, different ways that make it also antagonistic to working-class life" (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, pp. 112-113). Rothe (2006) sees deep contradictions existing between different classes' work-related practices. She asserts that a variety of academic interaction practices and expectations directly conflict with working-class identities (Rothe, 2006). First-generation academics report feeling externally compelled to engage in unfamiliar work practices (Curry, 2002; Grimes & Morris, 1997; Rothe, 2006; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). The main areas of adjustments to academic culture have been language and attire expectations, self-promoting behaviors, and workplace politics.

First-generation academics often find they have retained certain language uses that are potentially detrimental in their new occupational settings. Along the same lines many scholars of first-generation women and minority academics have argued that success in the professoriate

crucially depends on demonstrating academic language uses (Belanoff, 1993; Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu, 1990; Burnstein, 1977; Graff, 2003; Heath, 1993; Lareau, 2003; Lubrano, 2004; Peckham, 1995).

Peckham (1995) articulates these language factors both in terms of human capital as well as the attendant potential cultural capital ramifications. Peckham describes how academic culture requires experience with a diverse repertoire of thought and language (Bourdieu, 1990; Brice-Heath, 1997; Burnstein, 1971; Lareau, 2003; Lubrano, 2004; Peckham, 1995). This assumes experience with varied and abstract communication contexts that are comparatively less common in working-class settings (Littlejohn, 2002; Shaughnessy, 1977). Individuals from traditional academic backgrounds tend to be experienced with addressing new information in terms of the contexts in which it is received (Spenner, 1988). Peckham explains these issues using the language of his working-class background for illustration:

> …relies on idioms and concrete language—the language of description and narration. One will hear…few abstractions or generalizations that are hierarchically related…the speaker (or writer) assumes a familiar audience who shares the speaker's language, experiences, and associations. …and it is the language that working-class students have to overcome if they intend to succeed… The language of the professional/managerial-class… by contrast, is the kind the professorate expects. Not only are the surface conventions "correct," but the structures reflect valorized cognitive habits generated by the social structure of the [professoriate]… (Peckham, 1995. p. 271).

A few scholars have been critical of what they have described as underlying political realities. From these scholars' perspectives, cultural newcomers in academic contexts are often disadvantaged because academic culture's language uses take precedence (Martin, 2006, p 153-154). In response, many scholars including Piper (1995) argue for rethinking language issues in political terms. Specifically, defining academic language use as culture-bound rather than based on innate truths (Piper, 1995). In other words, gaining knowledge of academic language uses for the goal of increasing success chances exemplifies how political elements can invisibly operate

within academic culture's presumptions that its language standards are, "mirrors of reality" as opposed to in-group conventions (Piper, 1995, p. 294).

Within this idea, Hall (1992) criticizes American cultural studies programs for similar reasons. Hall charges that his colleagues generally practice unnecessarily obtuse and exotic language that functions in politically alienating ways. bell hooks (1993) expresses similar concerns regarding ways that academic language can operate in culturally alienating ways. She argues that academic language should be accessible, otherwise chances for dialogue are diminished (hooks, 1993, p.104-105).

Working-class academics have also written about workplace dress expectations. For some, adjustments have been considerable due to a number of dress habits learned from their backgrounds. For instance, working-class work attire is often dictated by function and comfort needs (Kauzlarich, 2006). These practices were learned by necessity when, for example, engaging in prolonged physical labor. Some controversy continues with this issue in that academics in general have individualized notions of appropriate attire (Goffman, 1959). Nevertheless some working-class academics have experienced cultural shock in terms of the expense involved in meeting their departments' dress codes. Still others have engaged in different practices.

> Vince, for example, chooses to ware Polo shirts during the school week. He can afford only five of them, so he wears the same shirts every week, but the fact that they are Polo allows him this latitude. This name brand also allows him to mask class position and make him appear to fit in. Colleagues have made remarks such as "Didn't you just wear that?" And, "Don't you have anything else to wear?" (Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006, p. 69-80).

So, among those who have practiced dress codes less formal than those of their departments, some reported receiving admonishments.

Self-promoting Behaviors

Common middle and upper middle-class workplace behaviors exhibit, and in some settings encourage, self-promoting behaviors (Roskelly, 1993; Sellman-Killingbeck, 2006). Such behaviors occur in any number of settings. For example, some academics generally seek job promotions, while others may simply be under pressure to gain tenure. Given such realities, working-class academics including Curry (2002) have emphasized the importance for new faculty to "not be anonymous" in terms of their home department as well as making themselves known to colleagues from other institutions (who may be the same people involved in future tenure recommendations) (Curry, 2002, p. 123).

However, self-promoting behaviors often feel inauthentic for first-generations academics (Christopher, 2005; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). This is mainly because working-class notions of work tend to prioritize job security over other considerations (Bronstein & Ramaley, 2002; Casey, 2005; Cooper & Temple, 2002; Curry, 2002; Harrison, 1992; Huxford, 2006; Jensen, 2004; Kovacovic, 1995; Rothe, 2006; Selman-Killingbeck, 2006; Weaver; 1993; Wilson, 2006). One particular self-promoting behavior is often interpreted by working-class individuals as superfluous and even pompous.

> Work-related functions (social or professional) demand a presentation of self that does not feel very authentic for the working-class academic. Most individuals deeply rooted in the working class do not feel comfortable with or adept at activities such as networking, "sucking up," and self-promotion. And yet, these are activities both common at such functions and often necessary for success (or even survival) (Wilson, 2006, p. 166).

Given her working-class background, Wilson (2006) experienced self-promoting behaviors among colleagues as merely posturing. Wilson quoted Dews' (1995) expression of Dew's own feelings toward such behaviors: "My background taught me that thinking or talking for the sake of thinking or talking is showboating, a waste of time in a world where time clocks

matter" (Wilson, 2006, p.160). Nevertheless, the challenge for first-generation college academics is that, as unfamiliar as some self-promoting behaviors may be, the practice is part of academic culture and often a professional necessity.

In other contexts self-promoting behaviors are often perceived by cultural newcomers as attempts at veiled professional intimidation. Although I do not know if Conquergood (1991) came from a working-class background, he described some of his colleagues' professional interactions as having an, "…almost surreal…" quality. Closer to my point, he expressed distress over what he saw as a political dynamic operating in these exchanges. He recounted conferences wherein presenters addressed questions from colleagues, and Conquergood described the setting as a "moment of murderousness in academia" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 216). He stated that the questioners' involvements in such exchanges can constitute what he called, "a seductive act of empowerment" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 216).

<center>Work Related Politics</center>

One important contested issue is working-class academics' feelings that to professionally succeed, they must often engage in certain practices that they disdain (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984), and one such practice is political gamesmanship. Most working-class academics interpret political gamesmanship as distasteful and unsettling, viewing it as evidence of valuing careerism over the pursuit of knowledge (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984, p. 121). Descriptors have included terms such as "chicanery" and "deception" (Wilson, 2006, p. 166).

> Many professionals born to the working class report feeling out of place and
> outmaneuvered in the office. Soon enough, [they]…learn that straight talk
> won't always cut it in shirt-and-tie America, where people rarely say what
> they mean" (Lubrano, 2004, p. 10).

However, the problem with this is that differences in class backgrounds translate into very different opportunities, including issues connected with social capital (Grimes & Morris,

1997). Nevertheless, some newcomers to academia may pursue social capital for reasons of

professional necessity rather than interest. For instance, Shott (2006) stated that working-class

academics are often less successful than their non-working-class colleagues at securing grants

and publications (Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Gold; 2004; Grimes & Morris, 1997; Kniffin, 2007;

Lee & Clery, 2004; Shott, 2006). However, Shott's baseball analogy goes beyond the kinds of

descriptive information found in academic resumes.

> Access to status…is like a professional baseball team whose major-league rosters
> were populated as much by AA and AAA players as by legitimate major-leaguers.
> Minor-league rosters would contain legitimate major-leaguers in equal measure.
> Sammy Sosa played for the Cubs. Baseball would not abide his languishing with
> the Elmira Blue Sox. Baseball teaches useful lessons…that merit is rewarded, but
> also that life is unfair and capital trumps all…
> As does life, baseball offers eternal mysteries—why the Cubs can't ever win—
> and lessons about merit that academia might heed. Like some colleagues, I am not
> in the major leagues. Yet I can hit the academic equivalent of major-league
> curveballs, if not as well as Sammy, and would be much happier in a world where
> merit mattered as much as does pedigree (Shott, 2006, p. 238).

To summarize, working-class academics have written about various unanticipated

adjustments to academic culture: language, attire, self-promoting behaviors, and workplace

politics. The next section addresses ways that some of these individuals have responded.

<u>Problematic Responses</u>

The literature features many ways in which first-generation college academics have

attempted independent means to navigate the vast thicket of workplace unknowns. One key idea

in the present study is that the definitions and meanings of observable behaviors often don't

translate well between individuals from different social-class backgrounds. Further, this issue has

been overlooked by some socialization theories, particularly a few theories about how outsiders

attempting membership in a group might independently ascertain the necessary cultural

knowledge. This section introduces three such trial-and-error approaches as well as their

shortcomings. They are first, applying approaches that have often worked in the past. Second, keeping vigilant for situations wherein one might learn by observation. Lastly, being alert for social cues. The problem with all three approaches is that they may not account for different cultural orientations, especially social class. Although first-generation college academics formally occupy the position of college professor, they nevertheless may not be participating in their workplace settings equitably due to their lack of familiarity with the unwritten rules.

Such individuals generally, "…do not know office culture" (Lubrano, 1994). They frequently experience difficulties with learning non-working-class interaction expectations. For example, facial expressions, body language, and, as Webb and her colleagues describe, "…where and how to move, and when to laugh" (Webb et al, 2002, p. 38). Sometimes they search their most relevant past experiences in attempts to extrapolate ways to participate in their new surroundings. Such approaches are connected to the idea of repertoires of practice. Throughout individuals' lives, some activities can span different traditions. In this way, experience ideally informs decisions regarding ways that individuals might alter behaviors in order to fit in a given situation (Giddens, 1991; Rogoff et al, 2008). A second option involves serendipitous observations of peer interactions. Research in the organization of participation suggest that in some social settings, a form of observation called eavesdropping can be an important means of learning. It essentially involves the practice of ascertaining unwritten rules of social interaction by first engaging in non-participatory observation of peers in order to construct inferences about unwritten workplace expectations. Lastly, individuals may decide to simply be on the lookout for any cues that they might use to guide their interaction styles (Rogoff et al, 2008). However, Martin's recommendation against trial and error again underscores the importance of class differences:

The latter option in gaining this necessary stock of knowledge is likely to be experienced as the most problematic, especially when poor relations are exacerbated by unacknowledged differences such as class, race, gender, and age, or theoretical or political-economic ideology, that serve as a subtext in interaction (Martin, 2006, pp. 136-137).

By now, readers should be aware that successful engagement in collegial interactions presupposes cultural knowledge (Martin, 2006). This section will end on two additional responses. The first focuses on ways working-class academics' notions of work can potentially backfire. Secondly, in light of the issues discussed so far, readers may be wondering if any working-class academics expressed emotions through behaviors learned early in their lives. The short answer is yes. However, many have also cautioned against any such displays.

Engagement in overproduction—being actively overly conscientious about the quantity and quality of one's work—seems to manifest from a combination of feelings of impostorship, the sensation of possessing insufficient academic cultural capital, and working-class notions of work, which are outcome-focused rather than process-focused (Rothe, 2006; Wilson, 2006). Rothe (2006) described her engagement in overproduction as a way to deal with guilt stemming from the knowledge of comparatively harsher physical labor and longer workweek hours that others from similar backgrounds as hers continue to endure (Caplan, 1993; Collay, 2002; Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Curry, 2002; Dews, & Leste-Law, 1995; Gregory, 1995; Grimes & Morris, 1997; Jensen, 2004; Koch, 2002; Lubrano, 2004; Muzzatti, & Samarco, 2006; Ryan, & Sackrey, 1984; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993; Zandy, 2001).

Yet such responses can inadvertently obstruct success chances. Long (2000) and her colleagues studied ways that they as well as other female academics from working-class backgrounds, "…struggle with reconciling class definitions of work…" (Long, et al , 2000). This is because academic productivity requires far more professional interaction than what many first-

generation academics are used to (Long, et al , 2000). In Penrod's (1997) assessment,

overproduction is often, "…the only thing that [those new to academic culture] know" (Penrod,

1997). Working-class experiences of work are often harsh and, later in their lives as working-

class academics, compounded by difficult-to-expunge beliefs that work is supposed to be

essentially unpleasant. Hence, as professors, most anything other than the grueling experiences

that accompany overproduction often do not feature the same deeply ingrained associations with

work (Long, et al, 2000). Selman-Killingbeck illustrates her own feelings regarding this issue:

> I signed up for every committee I could find. I volunteered to fill in when
> people were sick and spent long hours in my office. I spent the summer
> taking seminars on effective teaching. Basically, I modeled the behaviors of
> the people that I knew and respected in the department, albeit to the extreme
> (Selman-Killingbeck, 2006, p. 65).

Another issue involved in overproduction is the working-class notion that one must show

tangible evidence that one has indeed preformed work (Weis, 2004). That is, overproduction

seems to be influenced by working-class notions of self-worth based on having directly

observable proof of accomplishments (Christopher, 1995). Although Wilson (2006) cited

working-class sociologist Michael Schwalbe in the context of his research, Wilson further

discussed Schwalbe's experiences in terms of overproduction:

> I need to see a tangible product in order to believe I'm doing real work…I
> learned that real work is done with the back and hands and results in things
> you can see and touch and use…At least if I write a paper I can heft it. I can
> see that something exists where nothing existed before. And if I write lots of
> papers, I can see lines add up on my vita. All this is evidence of my ability to
> produce, which I also somehow learned is an important measure of a person's
> worth… (Schwalbe, 1995, p. 320; Wilson, 2006, p. 165).

Sometimes first-generation academics' experience disillusionment and even anger

concerning specific realities of the job that they had not anticipated (Grimes & Morris, 1997).

Many have had long, hard personal histories of frustration; years of struggling with

circumstances wherein their access to crucial resources and opportunities nearly always

obstructed their desires to succeed (Cannon, 2006; Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006; Leste-Law,

1995). Hence, when these individuals somehow finally attained an assistant professorship, some

held varying degrees of disdain for colleagues who, "…started and stayed at the top…" (Ryan &

Sackrey, 1984, pp. 121& 259).

> [T]here are differences in our psyches, in our expectations, our sense of
> entitlement, and the ways we move through the world; those differences are
> rarely addressed by political theorists, but they are important (Charlip, 1995,
> p. 39).

In a few places the literature features accounts of how working-class-based emotive

behaviors can be perceived in professional-managerial-class contexts. Definitions have ranged

from "quaint" (Piper, 1995), to "uncivil" (Martin, 2006). For instance, Piper (1995), a therapist

from a working-class family, argues that her profession tends to pathologize some working-class

behaviors, often seeing them as unable to respond to their occupation's codes of conduct, or as

having some sort of character shortcoming (Piper, 1995).

Piper's point parallels Martin's (2006) analysis of academic culture. Martin argues that

academia operates within professional-managerial-class orientations to the extent that, to those

steeped within the culture, accepted professional practices are assumed as based on innate truths

rather than established conventions. To illustrate his point, Martin connects two separate

departmental interactions to convey academia's professional-managerial-class social location. In

the first exchange, an administrator enforced a professional-managerial-class-based notion while

ostensibly disciplining Martin in connection to Martin's classroom persona. Specifically, the

administrator informed Martin that he needed to cease, "…playing the working-class hero…"

with his students (Martin, 2006, p. 137). Martin juxtaposed this exchange with a later interaction

to illustrate why no department member need ever be concerned with repercussions from playing

what Martin termed, the middle-class hero:

> …I went to lunch with two upper-middle-class colleagues, one of whom
> "highlighted" her experiences during the past summer spent in Tuscany while
> the other feigned identification and sympathized with the discomfort of long-
> distance travel (Martin, 2006, p. 137).

Social class issues are complex and misunderstandings between individuals from

different backgrounds can occur in a variety of contexts. Garger (1995) writes about a

misunderstanding he experienced with a colleague from an educated family background. The

colleague was a visiting academic and participant in a setting that included critical discussion

regarding revisions on an article Garger had been preparing for publication. The visiting

colleague repeatedly questioned Garger about a single issue; a behavior that, from the

colleague's perspective, was taking Garger to task in the spirit of healthy academic exchange.

However, Garger experienced the questioning quite differently:

> …I felt attacked and got defensive and angry. The only response I could
> conjure up was 'Fuck you' followed by a leap across the table to throttle him.
> I decided to withhold my response (Garger, 1995, p. 42).

After some consultation with a friend and colleague, Garger reevaluated the exchange

through a perspective closer to academic culture:

> Faculty were not necessarily searching for truth or the "right" answer. By
> challenging me about what I was presenting, John, the questioner, just may
> have been opening the door for fun. When I did not respond according to
> protocol, he tried again and then again. Undoubtedly he was receiving mixed
> messages, too. It was as if we were engaged in different and separate rituals
> in which neither of us understood the rules the other was playing by (Garger,
> 1995, p.50).

Other first-generation college academics have written about ways they tried to alter their

interaction styles in order to better fit into academic culture (Wilson & Langston 1995).

Christopher (1995) captures these kinds of concerns well:

I've tried for years now to change the tone and timbre of my voice to match the way I've changed the vocabulary and syntax of my speech. I've tried to disengage how much I care about what I'm talking about in order not to let my voice slide up that register. I've tried to make my gestures less florid, to look like I'm pointing a pencil instead of swinging a hammer. But the work boots and yellow bandanna are still there, ghost-presences, marking me (Christopher, 1995, p. 139-140).

So far, this review of the literature addressed ways that class-based definitions and meanings of observable behaviors often fail to translate between individuals from different social-class backgrounds. Within this context, the discussion has addressed ways that working-class-based norms can and often do function to work against newcomers to academic culture.

The Finer Places

Many working-class academics have also discussed positive aspects of their professional lives. This section will discuss a few of these privileges attendant to the position of college professor. Common themes such as autonomy are frequently expressed in contrasts between past and present work settings. Leste-Law (1995) makes an accurate summative observation:

However much we might complain about and perhaps resent the university as an institution that has caused us pain and loss, if you press any one of us from the working class who knows what work is really about, we have to admit that this is a pretty fine place to be (Leste-Law, 1995, p. 7).

So in some contexts their new academic lives featured varied activities, especially when compared to their recollections of working long shifts, or multiple jobs that often involved routine, and strenuous physical labor, without the option of calling in sick (Rothe, 2006). Christopher (1995) conveyed how her academic settings did not feel like work because it did not seem unpleasant, boring, or frustrating. Equally novel, academic employment means more than simply making the bills at the end of the month. That is, this occupation offers a sense of personal reward through various ways professors can gain peer recognition (Christopher, 1995).

Others discuss the comparatively luxurious academic infrastructure and physical settings. Kovacovic (1995) describes the pleasures of not being required to work weekends and holidays, and not being routinely hounded by a boss. Kovacovic also notes the privileges of having a private, heated office, his own mailbox, secretarial assistance, and access to other institutional facilities such as fitness centers. His summation is that, in light of such realities, "…personal complaints seem unbecoming at this point" (Kovacovic, 1995, p. 235).

Some places in the literature also emphasize the importance of formal support structures for increasing success chances for women and minority academics, and some specifically argue that such resources are important for tenure attainment (Bronstein & Ramaley, 2002; Collay, 2002; Koch, 2002). All individuals need to be in familiar social settings (Long, et al , 2000). Rothe (2006) describes such behaviors as searching for a sense of commonality or interpersonal homogeneity. It's a form of seeking refuge amidst places and people who share similar, same-class forms of social capital. "…as individuals, we move in fairly homogenous circles—living, working and interacting on an interpersonal level with others who are very much like us…" (Rothe, 2006, p. 56-57). These forms of capital are commonalities of, "…cultural expectations, language, and literacy" (Rothe, 2006, p. 56-57). Some scholars have experienced allegiances with colleagues and staff from working-class backgrounds. Long and her colleagues (2000) state they feel more of a sense of alliance with working-class male professors than with female professors from professional-managerial-class backgrounds (Long et al, 2000; Rothe, 2006).

The Present Study

Most sections in the present literature review either implicitly or explicitly assume that the issues of pain and exclusion associated with upward mobility are mainly within the experiences of traditionally recognized marginalized groups. As a result, other literatures include factors relevant to the present study. For instance, issues of identity and cultural tensions. In general this review of the literature discusses systemic obstructions to success for most academics from working-class backgrounds

Very few studies have focused on the professional socialization experiences of first-generation, white male, college academics (Dooris & Guidos, 2006; Ginther & Hayes, 2003; Kniffin, 2007; Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006). Tenure likely constitutes the most acute time segment of their professional socialization in two aspects. It is a time that includes their entrance into this professional culture, as well as a crucial period within which they must succeed (Mazurek, 1995; Rothe, 2006).

The literature holds less information about processes or structures involved in working-class white male academics' attempts at tenure attainment. In one data component of Grimes and Morris's 1997 study, all the participants—sociologists from working-class backgrounds—were asked to identify what they believed to be the single most significant factor in their educational trajectories. The portion of their participants who were white males identified social class (Grimes & Morris, 1997).

This study intends to follow previous findings and approaches closest to the present study's research question to learn more about this group's social-class-based experiences and their possible connections to professional success within American academic culture.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining this study's phenomenological perspective and its appropriateness. Later, rationale and strategies are explained, including support for the use of ethnographic tools for analysis, as well as details regarding procedures used from the initial stages to the final write up. The second half of the chapter addresses ethical issues and includes a section on the role of the researcher. The latter includes specifics regarding time-tested procedures that were incorporated toward the goal of minimizing researcher bias. The chapter concludes with a report on a pilot study that I conducted, and includes ways I subsequently used my research experiences to refine the actual study.

Theoretical Perspective

This study incorporates a phenomenological perspective for the goal of gaining substantive and rich understanding of this study's participants' professional socializations into their work place cultures. In line with established practices, this study analyzes participants' interview data as products of how they define their tenure attainment experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Within a phenomenological perspective, this study incorporates symbolic interactionalism and ethnomethodology. Regarding symbolic interactionalism, according to Blumer (1969) as cited in Taylor & Bogdan (1998), humans experience social reality through processes that include making mental associations with what they believe a given experience means (Blumer, 1969). Such meaning-making processes are tantamount to interpretations of people make sense of others and objects in encounters with others and objects in daily social interactions. This assumption of symbolic interactionalism leads to this study's second

phenomenological perspective: ethnomethodology. The study makes use of this perspective to

identify social-class-based patterns of symbolic interactionalism perspectives and tendencies,

including my role of researcher. Stated another way, the present study is similar to work

conducted by Mehan & Wood (1975) as cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 13) in that it

incorporates assumptions that people from similar past experiences may knowingly or otherwise

develop identifiable patterned ways of making sense of social experiences. Taylor & Bogdan

state the matter this way:

> For ethnomethodologists, the meanings of actions are always ambiguous and
> problematic. Their task is to examine the ways people apply abstract cultural
> rules and commonsense understanding in concrete situation to make actions
> appear routine, explicable, and unambiguous. Meanings, then, are practical
> accomplishments on the part of members of society (Taylor & Bogdan; 1998,
> p. 13).

These issues point to qualitative methods as best suited for studying participants'

professional socialization experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

<u>Rationale and Strategies for In-Depth Interviewing</u>

Ethnographic methods are most advantageous for the present study because they can

account for comparatively wider conceptions of social class without necessarily threatening

scholarly quality (Lareau, 2008). Ethnography, the systematic process of interviewing, listening

to, and analyzing the experiences of individuals on their own terms, was the most useful

approach. Ethnography is concerned with the "…meanings which human beings use to structure

and construct their existence" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 28). Further, previous sociological

studies of marginalized groups point to the strengths of ethnographic analysis of participants'

experiences, especially so because surveys may not obtain the kind of information needed to

address the study's research questions. For instance, ethnographic analysis is advantageous for

exploring issues connected to participants' avoiding certain professional interaction settings, as well as other possible behaviors of self-exclusion (Lareau, 2008).

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

The research question identified participants: working-class tenured white male academics. This is also due to the frequently documented likelihood that my participants' experiences occurred in settings featuring proportionately more white male colleagues from educated middle and upper-middle-class backgrounds. As such, data is more applicable to the study's focus on social class related phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

This study received official IRB approval from the University of Iowa Institutional Review Boards prior to its start (http://research.uiowa.edu/hso/). Soon after IRB approval, I sent out a call for participants via email on the American Association of Working-Class Academics email list-serve (http://awcaonline.org/wordpress/). This initial stage yielded approximately half the required number of 12. I then networked with these initial participants over a period of approximately two weeks until I secured 12 individuals. The participants were contacted by means of snowballing (Polsky, 1969; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The e-mail used to contact participants appears in Appendix B. All participants' tenure experiences occurred in either four-year colleges or State research universities. Regarding sample size, established research traditions strongly suggests twelve participants were an appropriate sample for gathering the necessary data (Kavale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Participants were not random sampled, so several sections discuss efforts to avoid generalizations. All participants volunteered to be interviewees, and many places in the data clearly indicated evidence that interviewees invested significant thought about many issues prior to this study. So in this sense although participants

constitute a very select group, this also allowed access to rich data because the interviewees were conversant in the topic.

In-depth interviewing provided the best means to gather data on past events that were not accessible by other means. It required a simple design for data collection by virtue of use of a single method that allowed close, personal, and private interactions with participants (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). My approach to in-depth interviewing involved one-on-one verbal interactions (Kahn & Cannell, 1957). Initial planning of the structure of the interviews followed Patton's (1990) approach. Interviews were scheduled and conducted via digital audio recorded telephone conversations because all but one participant lived outside of my state of residence. During interviews, all participants talked from private, closed rooms. Interview notes were supplemented by digital audio recordings which were obtained non-intrusively and made with all participants' consent (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

The following discussion addresses my documentation procedures, and later shifts attention to discovery and coding procedures. Data collection methods are in accordance with those of established qualitative research traditions (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). Flexibility was incorporated throughout the research design so that specific adjustments were made without complicating the study's completion. Data collection included prepared, open-end questions supplemented by probing, follow-up questions (Patton (1990, pp. 280-290, in Taylor & Bogdan). The prepared questions were substantive in nature, and pertained to professionally-related, formal and informal social settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Documentation procedures included interview dates, times, titles, chronologies, and descriptions of settings. This facilitated pattern identification, categories for subsequent analysis

of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). I took handwritten notes for an interview journal (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). At times, non-verbal communications such as voice tone were noted as possible indicators of important directions for follow-up questions.

Data analysis involved over 14 months of extensive work which began with the interviewing stage, included ongoing review of the methodological literature, and repeated consultations with my dissertation co-supervisors. Analysis consisted of 3 distinct stages: ongoing discovery, coding and attempts to discount data. First, ongoing discovery involved trying out a number of established interpretive strategies including studying field notes made during interviews and maintaining a log of my speculations and interpretations. I combined these activities to gradually amalgamate themes. Definitional criteria for this stage included patterns in participants' vocabularies, feelings, and stated activities (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 144). Such items were compared to other aspects of interviewees' experiences for the goal of increasing the accuracy of the 3 eventual themes that emerged, and discussed in Chapter 4.

The second, coding stage included first, grouping similar statements from the data, second, developing labeled coding categories for each group of statements, and finally, repeated examinations the first two steps in consultation with outside readers in order to be vigilant of ways that my own meaning-makings systems might complicate rather than facilitate insights. In conjunction with continued attention to my original interviewee questions I eventually developed the four conclusion statements that are discussed in Chapter 5.

<center>Role of the Researcher</center>

This section discusses important issues in the literature on qualitative research methodologies that I incorporated for the goal of addressing researcher bias. These issues include my own social class background and the ways I self-examined as a researcher regarding my

relationships with this study's topic. Later, I included an overview of my attempts at discounting

data intended to increase the probability of data credibility.

My own working-class background may have influenced me in one aspect that I

considered carefully in order to maximize its potential research-related strength and minimize

bias. The methods literature cautions that interviewers are "likely to misunderstand participants'

language since they do not have opportunities to study it in common usage" (Taylor & Bogdan,

1998). Taylor and Bogdan advise, "An understanding of your findings requires some

understanding of your own perspectives, logic, and assumptions" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Differences in experience and perception inevitably exist, and so I exercised self-

interrogation to increase researcher self-vigilance (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Marshall &

Rossman, 1998). Bourdieu concurs with this stance, recommending that,

> …a researcher who has thought through the meanings of any questions in a
> questionnaire, and who has theorized the method employed, is more likely to
> understand the sorts of problems that will inevitably come up in any answers
> he or she receives (Webb et al, 2002, p. 74).

This included rechecking data in search of alternative explanations (Marshall &

Rossman, 1998). As Bourdieu likewise cautions researchers:

> There is…at least an element of the personal, rather than the objective.
> Certainly sociologists do enter into a relationship with the objects of their
> research which can become 'personalized'; because they invest in it, and
> because they are immersed in it, the data can come to take on an almost
> human aspect, which can make it seem objective rather than framed… (Webb
> et al, 2002, p. 73).

The inclusion of how I recalled my own academic experiences constitutes one component

of this approach. The process involves three stages recommend by Marshall and Rossman

(1998). They recommend a first stage in which I self-examine as a researcher in terms of my

relationships with the study's topic. The following personal narrative demonstrates the first

stage:

My background is rooted in an average sized Midwest American city. Most of my prior life has been experienced within working-class culture (completing this dissertation shortly after my 55th birthday). My K-12 GPA, as well as those from a couple of semesters of college shortly after high school graduation were mostly at or below average. I held numerous unskilled jobs in construction, factories and restaurants, during which I pursued sporadic employment as an itinerant musician.

I enrolled in a Midwest Community college when I was 34, and although I have been a serious student, the time span from then to the completion of my dissertation has been approximately 20 years. I worked in restaurants as an undergraduate and as a teaching assistant and adjunct instructor in three higher education institutions during my Master's and Ph.D. programs. My experiences of alienation, isolation, self-doubt, and frustration were countless. Yet I have told colleagues and students that my persistence in attaining a terminal degree has been "fear-driven." That is, disturbing thoughts of going back to the life circumstances in my previous existence drove me through higher education. Another powerful drive has been the rewarding experiences of helping students in whom I see much of my earlier self: young people in non-privileged circumstances trying to span the often daunting bridge between their current circumstances and their desires for something better, something a little less painful.

I slowly developed an awareness that social class backgrounds inform individual's definitions and meanings of social interactions. Among my numerous experiences connected to the present point, here's one: On my way to a graduate seminar I was reading some papers while waiting for the old Jefferson building's elevator as it reluctantly groaned away its descent to the first floor. From my location outside the closed elevator doors, I heard two male voices accompanying the sounds of the elevator as it descended nearer. I could tell from the diction and

subject matter of the conversation that not only were these two white males university maintenance workers, they seemed to be as intelligent and decent as most individuals I might meet in my daily routine. However, something important was about to happen, something as invisible to most people born into middle and upper class families as it seemed blaringly obvious to me. As the doors parted, the instant the maintenance men spotted the papers in my hand along with my other academic accoutrements, what had been an interesting and lively conversation between them was stopped dead. As they exited past me, they almost instinctively provided more space for my entrance into the elevator than necessary and moved on in an almost hurried, painfully humbled manner. Before the doors had opened, the tone of their conversation had been routine, confident. Now, silence.

Returning to the present discussion, Marshall and Rossman's second stage of addressing research bias involves two prompts: "How are others and objects classified?" and, regarding my own classifications of key items within the present study's topic: "Are there frequent references to some same things and events?" (Marshall & Rossman, 1998, pp. 112, 113). The following is a summation of my own engagement with their second and third stages, a kind of focused, reflective essay approach that Marshall and Rossman also recommended for addressing potential bias.

I worked at approaching the processes and objects of self-reflection as learned, identifiable tendencies, instead of understanding my experiences and feelings as reruns of realities. For instance, I used my pilot study experience and repeated reviewing the methodology literature to gain further sensitivities regarding how my background influences my perceptions (Webb, et al, 2002).

Discounting Data

The following section discusses some specifics regarding ways I have further attempted to address researcher bias through systematic attempts to discount my data (Deutscher, 1973; Mills, 1940; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I invested significant time and focus on interpreting my data with attention to the contexts in which it was collected. Regarding my frame of mind and initial purpose in this study, my goal was to call attention to and make a contribution to an important and comparatively little explored topic within social class studies: the experiences, perceptions and connected professional success strategies of working-class white male academics. As for questions about how my frame of mind changed during the course of the present study, I gained a conceptual sociological tool to start thinking about social equality issues in social structural contexts. That is, although the present study does not discuss structuration perspectives extensively, this approach has significantly influenced my analysis.

My role in the interviews was another factor in discounting data. I conducted data collection in ways intended to provide readers reasonable cause to believe that my participants were forthright (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I perhaps excessively expressed my appreciation for their participation as well as my respect for their accomplishments. There is evidence in the data that participants were comfortable in the sense that they rarely seemed guarded in their responses; they were so candid in fact that a few participants made statements such as, "Please don't include this in your write-up but…" Conversely, I also examined and reexamined the data's consistency to locate possible exaggerations, and found little evidence. I noted patterns in the data in additional contexts other than strictly emergent themes. For example, I indicate, in chapters 4 and 5, places where my perceptions and analyses of data were inferential. I paid

attention to not only a given portion of data but also the context within which the participant was communicating.

One strength in the data collection resided in the fact that although I had prepared open-ended questions in advance, the overwhelming majority of participants' comments were unsolicited during all interviews. They were enthusiastic, personally interested, and willing to talk about their experiences. This point is significant given Deutscher's (1973) and Mills' (1940) recommendations for researchers to be vigilant for any differences between participants' responses to prepared questions and their talking spontaneously. Specifically, data was noticeably consistent across participants' elaborations of both specific events and abstractions.

Member checks were also made (Kvale, 1996). Immediately upon completion of interview transcripts, hardcopies were sent via U.S. Mail to all participants. Further, approximately 14 months later all participants received a hardcopy draft of the entire dissertation for comment. Some returned their hardcopies with hand written comments and minor content corrections while a few others offered the same kinds of minor feedback via private correspondence, and a few return-mailed their hardcopies with significant (and appreciated) hand-written proof reading and editing suggestions.

Aside from helpful editing changes regarding content, I also honored one participant's request that I partially alter one of his quotes due to his concern that his word-choice might be misunderstood by some readers. I also sent courtesy emails to two participants expressing my concern over the fact that none of their interview data was included in the study and my assurance that the omissions were solely due to methodological issues; that their interview data was as valid in its own right as the data that was included. For instance, I told them that a previous draft addressed specific issues these two participants brought to the study in a separate

sub section titled, "Significant Exceptions." I then explained that based on further review of the methodological literature and consultations with my dissertation advisors, such omissions are common in ethnographic methodologies. Lastly, most participants expressed interest and enjoyment from reading and commenting on drafts.

Ethical Considerations

The study was designed and conducted in accordance with established ethical criteria (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). Participants were guaranteed confidentiality. For example, pseudonyms replaced participants' names to protect their identities. Participants also had access to and commentary on all data, as well as the finished dissertation. Further, interviews were scheduled and executed with attention to avoiding any undue disruption of participants' personal schedules. As previously indicated, this study received official IRB approval prior to the data gathering stage (IRB source).

Pilot Study

The pilot study's interviewee was contacted by means of his professional connections with one of my advisors. The advisor initially contacted my interviewee via email, and my interviewee kindly volunteered approximately one hour out of his workday for our interview which took place in person in the interviewee's office. The interviewee was a working-class white male tenured academic, employed at the University of Iowa, and the interview was also our first meeting. Soon after my arrival at the interviewee's office, he cordially greeted me and gave me an interesting introductory tour of his department. After the roughly 10-minute tour we sat down in his office and began our discussion by sharing general background and professional information about each other, including information about the present study. Our conversation gradually focused more on the participant's comments about his working-class background, and

an overview of his academic career. This created a comfortable context within which I eventually selected an appropriate moment to begin my prepared interview questions.

Pilot Study Data Analysis

In accordance with established research methods, the first stage of analysis (discovery) involved moving from raw data, to typologies (Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In studying the data from both isolated and general contexts, discovery was not strictly linear. Various schemes and specifics were tried and revised while others abandoned.

The coding stage involved progressing from transcript data to themes which were in turn translated to proposition statements. From this, I eventually constructed a conceptual framework. Throughout this process I reviewed methodology literature to improve understandings of these procedures. For example, to refine understanding of the subject matter, I came to conceptualize the process of moving from propositions to an outline structure. This was something akin to first developing and organizing separate reasons for an eventual argument, while simultaneously rethinking the argument's thesis. Taylor and Bogdan communicate this as somewhat analogous to constructing, "…a story line [that] will help [researchers] decide what concepts and themes [the researchers]…want to communicate in [a] study and how…data should be organized and coded" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 151).

Regarding this participant's recollections of his earliest days as assistant professor, he said that he knew comparatively less than other professors about specific professional interaction norms. For example, he had applied for tenure in his fourth year, a move he later felt had been politically unwise. In his words, "It was a dumb move. It can be seen as brash." He gradually became aware that certain professional behaviors were associated with different class-based meanings. For instance, he stated that his behaviors with colleagues at meetings should have

exhibited more moderation. He commented on his belief that there were times when he was silent when he should have spoken up during discussions, and other times when he thought he had been unproductively vocal. In his words, "A better reaction would have been somewhere in the middle." He also speculated that a number of colleagues who were from college-educated family backgrounds, tended to interpret his professional interaction styles in ways that differed from his own understandings of his behaviors. For example, he stated that he often privately felt that some colleagues elaborated their thoughts more than he thought necessary.

He also retained tendencies learned prior to his academic career. For instance, he stated that he tended to be direct. He also said he retained working-class-based notions that inform his views on career. Specifically, he described his occupational titles in terms of his responsibilities to these titles, rather than in terms of using positions as promotional stepping stones. This is evident in his comment, "I don't think anybody would portray me as a climber. I got to where I am because I did some of the things I was supposed to do." This is also evident in another comment, "I never thought of myself as a climber, in many ways, people are surprised I have the job that I have now."

Pilot Study Summary

My initial interview questions enabled the participant to start topically anywhere he wanted. For instance, he seemed comfortable beginning with an overview of his academic life, and in several instances, he appeared to be comfortable with elaborating spontaneous connecting thoughts. Marshall and Rossman (1998) state that such instances might rarely occur for novice researchers. That is, "The interviewer often tends to not ask questions that evoke long narratives from participants either because of lack of expertise…or…skill" (Marshall & Rossman, 1998, p. 110).

As a result of the following issues, I refined both the research question and interview questions for the actual study (Blumer 1969; Bruyn, 1966; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). First, I learned that it is more advantageous for interviewers to understanding the underlying ideas on which a given interview question is based, this is far more important than merely familiarization with a prepared questions explicit wording. I learned this lesson from several instances in the pilot interview when, due to the unanticipated topical contexts that emerged from a number of the participant's responses to a previous question, presenting the next question on the docket in as-is form, necessitated the need for me to spontaneously attempt establishing a sensible transition to the next prepared question. This experience felt awkward yet informed my subsequent refinements of the actual study's interview stage. Also, during transcript analysis, I noticed moments had occurred that were ripe for follow-up questions, yet I failed to recognize some of those opportunities. As a result, I was more attuned during the actual study's interviews. For instance, something as simple as, "Could you give me an example?" served as a more useful follow-up technique than I previously thought.

<u>Summary</u>

Everyone holds various assumptions as they embark on research, and I am no exception. I initially assumed that the literature closest to the present study's topic, as well as the wider sociological literature on the lives of the upwardly mobile from working-class backgrounds, would be plentiful and a more coherent body of information than it is. Also, regarding changes in my intellectual allegiances, my knowledge and respect of a number of theoretical perspectives and methodologies increased. Throughout my experiences with the study, I matured and disciplined myself as a researcher. These issues constitute only some of the methodological

considerations of which I have become cognizant, considerations that are crucial for scholarly

research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

<u>Introduction</u>

My participants worked at either 4-year colleges or state research institutions located across the continental United States. They were at various stages in their post-tenure academic careers, and worked within a variety of academic disciplines, for instance, Languages, Mathematics, Sociology, English, Religious Studies, and Education. A possibly significant fact is that roughly half of the participants did not matriculate from undergraduate student to tenured professor in continuous periods. For instance, after experiences with blue-collar jobs during their high school years, some entered college a few years after the traditional entrance age, and some experienced years of working jobs between graduation from college and graduate school. Some other participants worked in white-collar occupations prior to their graduate programs.

This chapter organizes my participants' experiences around three themes; Theme 1 addresses some of the formal and informal social contexts of the tenure process, and Themes 2 and 3 focus on my participants' psychological and social challenges and successes that were also part of the process. The first theme discusses ways that my participants gradually added to their understandings of academia as a social institution that operated according to certain social conventions and contexts which many of them experienced as radical departures from the social conventions and contexts of their background cultures. The second theme discusses what many participants reported as significant psychological stressors that often accompanied their attempts to achieve professional success. Success was dependent on learning about and developing success strategies within the new social contexts they faced. The third theme discusses some of my participants' specific accounts and reflections regarding how they learned to meld their

previous working-class experiences with their experiences in academic culture to eventuate professional success.

<u>Theme 1: Learning and Adapting to a Foreign Culture: Learning How to Act</u>

Theme 1 discusses the ways that most participants gradually learned that they were operating in new social class contexts and that they needed to learn important academic cultural knowledge necessary for professional success. Significant forms of middle and upper middle-class social knowledge included speech patterns and usages: what to say and how to say it via uses that are often meaningful in contexts of professional-managerial-class experiences. Participants also discussed experiences regarding social-class-based differences in approaches to dress codes.

<u>Academic Cultural Knowledge</u>

Early on, many participants processed middle and upper middle-class behaviors that they observed through their working-class mindsets. They reported significant difficulties adjusting to some of the realities of their professional workplace cultures. Some participants did talk about aspects of human capital that they had to learn early in their pre-tenure experiences, for instance, how to use the copy machine, and whom to contact regarding malfunctioning equipment, most commented on various forms of important, and unknown to them, academic cultural knowledge. Along with his more detailed comments, participant Ed made the following summative statement that serves as an opening for the following group of participants' comments on the matter, "As a working-class academic, as an about-to-become-academic, you don't really know what's going on."

Within this general idea, other participants offered more specific experiences. For example, Gene stated that, "…while everybody else was plotting their careers, I did almost no

career plotting. This was from 1970 on. So I did no career plotting. I didn't know really what that was." Many participants shared stories about important realizations they encountered regarding previously unknown instrumental, as well as cultural, knowledge. Ed's quote represents well the overall categories of new knowledge that most participants discovered.

> …here's something that was probably a revelation at the end of my PhD career. I didn't have the slightest idea of what kind of job I was going to try to get after I got my PhD, even though I was 46 years old. I didn't have the slightest idea, that it would be the equivalent of illegal to get a job at the university where I got my degree. Nobody had ever told me that. You don't have any idea of what it's like to be out and looking for a job, once you get your degree.
> …You don't know that somebody should be keying you into what kind of specialty you should focus on and how many jobs are going to be available in that specialty. You don't think about that. And nobody lets you know about that.
> …I had no idea of the value of networking within the academic community… how to get publications out there. That's something that, if somebody can tell you how to do it, it helps an awful lot. Because if you have to do it on your own, it takes a long time.

Many participants' experiences concurred with Ed's points. In general, their goal was to gain professional-managerial class-based perspectives and meanings associated with the observable behaviors of others who were more familiar with this culture. Further, most participants also discussed approaches they developed in an intent to accomplish this. Several talked about systematic ways they began to understand their experiences in terms of social contexts, rather than merely looking inward for answers. Among the discussions on this issue, Al offered his explanation as to why he concluded that it is usually the case that individuals from working-class backgrounds lack important, culturally preparatory experiences with professional-managerial-class social contexts.

> …Oh we're always finding them out after. Because there's no way to find them out before; our experiences have not included those. Or our experiences include the wrong side of those things. There's this lack of comfort, lack of feeling like you're in the club…American individualism teaches us to take

responsibility for everything that happens to us, right? Instead of thinking
like C. Wright Mills said, in kind of a contextual way… So we think,
"Something must be wrong with me."

Several other participants also discussed ways they attempted to learn the meanings

associated with academic behaviors. The following quotes from Doug and Tom, respectively,

describe well how many participants went about learning academia's cultural meanings first, in

order to then begin to learn how to participate or act accordingly within academic culture's social

contexts.

I don't like being relegated to the fringes, but I do like positioning myself
there. Because it lets me look at—and this is very much bell hooks' idea—
that by sitting on the fringes, I know enough of something that I can see it
and understand it, but not too much of it that I can't critique it.

Although participants' experiences themselves were first-hand direct interactions with

others, some participants told me that they gained more personally helpful understandings of

these interactions by thinking about them also through contextual or, structural social

understandings. In other words thinking about their first-hand experiences from more macro

social contexts, some participants said that thinking about their experiences this way better

enabled them to gain understandings of how social class structural relationships can operate.

Tom elaborated his view on how such approaches can serve as a means to learn about academic

culture:

…You have to be able to step into the world of the reference group…and
you're taking their perspective, not necessarily because you see things that
way, but you know what's going to resonate with them…you can understand
what is expected of you and so, in many different ways that makes you a
stranger to both worlds…and I think the difference is that: *that marginality.*
It's like you're an expert in both; the marginality gives you a certain level of
objectivity to be able to understand the dynamics a bit differently when
you're looking at *interactions between* people.

Doug emphasized the importance of trying to ascertain who might function as what he called "informants"—selected individuals that Doug acquainted himself with in part as means of informal sources of cultural knowledge. Yet, whether Doug used his interactions with participants or simply used direct interactions and observations in professional social settings, he shared with me his key learning goals. His following quote is representative of what most participants encountered in general regarding the social knowledge aspects of academic culture.

> …But, you know, in going to college and so forth, what it forced me to do was, I became a reader of culture… I kept coming up against new cultures. I would go into them, have to sort of sit there and say, "Well, what's going on here?" "How does it work?" and, "What are the rules?"

In general, most participants explained their attempts to gain advantageous understandings of the academic cultural knowledge of their new professional surroundings. Concurrently, they developed approaches for optimizing successful outcomes.

<u>Learning How and When to Speak</u>

Many participants discussed social class conventions of academic language. A key issue was social class-based differences in the meanings associated with appropriate language usages. They shared stories about how they realized that academic culture encompasses its own discursive rules or codes. Some participants were of the mind that language codes are important because meanings often do not translate—mean the same thing—to individuals from different social classes. Doug expressed the importance succinctly in his statement, "…if people don't know that code, [to those who do know it] they're looking like someone who didn't get it." Although this at first may seem like a tautology, Doug and many other participants explained in detail some of their experiences of being perceived by academic cultural insiders as "someone who doesn't get it."

One recurring point throughout the data was that most participants were concerned that aspects of their previously learned working-class-based language usages were interpreted in academic contexts as signs of professional inferiority. The initial challenge for many interviewees was to first become aware of the very existence of social-class-based codes and to then learn how their uses can bear on professional success.

Some participants noted that they had been observant for patterns in how their colleagues talked, and likewise, tried to monitor their own language use. The following comments by Tom best express the goals underlying academic language conventions. Most participants seemed concerned about at least some aspect in which working-class language use might not be in their own best interests.

> … I realized that…I needed to dis-identify with my working-class based diction and start talking as if I was managerial professional class…just to try to fit in. So I think it's fairly common among working-class academics who identified themselves as blue-collar working class as opposed to white-collar labor class…for me, picking up language and beginning to practice and use that language meant that I could basically do battle with anybody in the classroom. So that was significant for me because any elocution they could come up with I had one to match it.

The following quote best illustrates specific aspects of academic language use that many participants made efforts to learn; vocabulary, diction, and appropriate speaking tone and rate. Al's comments best illustrate some participants' experiences with learning to communicate and understand the content and diction conventions of academic language.

> …the diversity of vocabulary was just so different between myself and my colleagues I just felt that my vocabulary was just so much more limited than theirs, or, far inferior. And I felt I got caught up, over the period in grad school. But I've never been unaware of the possibility of those differences. I'm much more comfortable now than I was years ago, but I've been doing this for years now…my partner…has a PhD in sociology. We play word games with each other, we're always correcting each other. And she's kind of upper middle-class background…the reason I mention this is because I made it my business to learn to speak correctly.

Other participants discussed why they believe academia has a preferred voice tone and rate or speed at which one should speak. Participant Ed noted the importance of, "…speaking slowly: that's a middle-class code. Speaking slowly, kind of in phrases, pausing…" Joe implicitly concurred albeit in contrasting terms: "They always seem more measured: a little bit slower, more deliberate in their speech. I talk fast. Often times I speak before I process, and I've done that for a long time."

In addition, some participants shared stories of their early difficulties with becoming comfortable with standard procedural aspects of interactional settings. This seemed to be more so regarding learning various unwritten conventions as well as adjusting to the nature of interactions that occur in bureaucratic institutions such as state universities. Departmental and committee meetings were often discussed, not only in terms of language expectations, but more frequently in terms of participants' impatience with what they perceived as unnecessarily cumbersome or inefficient protocols. Vince expressed his views this way:

> It's very frustrating because it's so intangible and movement doesn't advance. It just postpones things. I really am impatient with that…no matter what it is, you bring it up to an academic committee and you can be sure that your enthusiasm is going to collapse because everybody's going to see, either points to expand, diverse, retract or whatever. But, whatever enthusiasm you had, will wane, because, oh, it's such a morass, you know. It's a kind of paralysis of analysis, and possibly a trait of academics: specialists in making short stories long.

Joe had his own way of expressing his experiences: "I guess it's just the nature of the beast that academics are longwinded. You know, whenever you're at a faculty meeting, nobody's ever succinct at faculty meetings." In general, most participants told me they often experienced excessive elaborations in such settings.

Some participants talked about a different aspect of academic exchange with which it was especially difficult for them to become comfortable. In particular, they discussed important social class differences regarding what it means when a colleague challenges someone else's ideas. Some participants reported that it was difficult for them to learn and become comfortable with the middle and upper-middle-class conventions of disagreement in formal settings such as in meetings. Disagreeing and challenging ideas in the academic cultural sense is in part intended as a means of optimizing decision outcomes. However, the same behavior in working-class social contexts often means that the initiator is willfully attempting to provoke adversarial conflict, to intimidate or embarrass. Al best explained some of these important social class differences:

> As an academic…you know, for people to listen to you, to put your work out there, to say things, to initiate discussions, to disagree with people, to challenge people [but if you're working-class] you don't do that. It's really, really hard to do that. I mean, I can do it now…It just felt almost like it was something you should not do! Even though you knew a participant may be wrong, or you knew that there was another way of looking at the discussion at hand than the way it was put forward, there was a reluctance to bring that to the attention of the group. Because you felt like that was showboating, or even maybe you were not quite sure. You were just uncomfortable about what they were saying, and you felt, "There's got to be another way of looking at this." But, you know: you didn't challenge.

This is an important difference because, especially as Al explained, these learned, working-class associations are deeply ingrained. Conversely, Al and other participants talked about these differences and how they can be perceived from a professional-managerial class mindset. As Ed stated, it is important in academic settings to: "…do your best, not to let yourself slip into emotionally laden discourse." Tom also provided a summative statement on the matter: "What people do then is engage in fairly inexpressive behavior. That inexpressive behavior is basically commensurate with the demands of the bureaucracy." Most participants had much to

say about how academic language is not merely a matter of conventional English usages. In their view, they needed to learn important social class meanings associated with academic language use.

<div align="center">Dress Expectations</div>

Dress is a notable issue in that participants were nearly unanimous in their resistance to dress in formal attire. Most participants' resistance was based on their elitist associations with the practice of formal dress codes. Several dressed in casual attire because they associated formal attire with an acceptance of social hierarchical and authoritarian tendencies, things that most participants frowned upon. Most participants shared specific instances wherein they discussed differences of opinion within their departments regarding appropriate attire, as well as their overall views on the subject. The following quote of Doug is one of the best illustrations of the latter context:

> Part of it comes down to, the kinds of uniforms that people wear; we all wear uniforms of some sort. I don't wear suits and I don't wear ties…That, you know, the people in power who wear suits tend to discard people who come from working-class backgrounds. So, then, I would kind of refuse to put on that: put on that uniform, because of what it represents for me.

Participants had varying accounts regarding the degree of their respective department's adherence to formal dress attire. For instance, at one extreme, a few participants mentioned that their departments were fairly flexible in dress requirements, while other participants shared very different accounts. In the cases of Joe and Matt, differences of opinion between participants and colleagues were openly expressed. Joe recounted an experience that occurred at a work related social setting.

> I've always wore jeans…I'd wear khakis and a polo shirt. And that set me apart. I knew it set me apart…I went through my interview process for a faculty position. And then a year later, when I went to a Christmas party I wore the jacket that I wore during my interview.

And one of the other professors in the department was sitting there with another one—both were at my hiring meeting—and he said, "I remember when we saw you during the interview. I turned to my other colleague and said, 'We're never going to see him in that jacket again.'"

I'm a casual kind of person. But his statement was a kind of dig, that sort of thing. In other words his stated sentiment about me was, [Joe] doesn't clean up well." You know, "We can't expect [Joe] to clean up well."

Matt told me that he had always tended to dress more informal than most of his colleagues. In fact, he said that he dressed as informally as he thought was possible. He described his views on attire as connected to his overall disinterest in some of the formalities common in academia. For instance, one of Matt's stories was about one disagreement he had with a colleague regarding the expected attire at a ceremonial university function.

…those formalities of academe had not been a part of my life at all and it was really an adjustment. And at this specific meeting, I was angry. The way I remember it, we were going to be required to wear academic garb for an occasion. You know, the robes, the hat, the whole formal thing, for an occasion that didn't make sense to me, and I was angry about it, and I referred to academic garb as academic garbage.

…I probably should not have done that. But a colleague…was just enraged by that and demanded that it be stricken from the minutes. I was angry enough that I said, "No, I want it in the minutes, with my name on it because I'm the one who said it." It was one example where I was not into the formalities and titles and so forth because of my background, as much as some people were.

The data on dress was striking in that participants acknowledged their awareness of professional-managerial-class meanings of "proper" dress. However, how participants dealt with these social class differences clearly contrasted with their views toward language issues. Most participants talked about their conscious resistance to donning formal attire.

These stories cumulatively came together into a theme about learning new social contexts: academic cultural knowledge necessary for success. Specifics included speech uses and dress codes. Most of these stories illustrated how one group of individuals encountered and adjusted in varying ways to new, often unwritten kinds of knowledge.

<u>Theme 2: The Deep Psychological Costs of Conformity</u>

Most participants reported significant psychological stress that accompanied their enculturation into academic social contexts. Theme 2 includes participants' feelings of impostorship, or conflicting feelings concerning appropriate professional measures of value and behaviors. Contested issues included measures of appropriate professional interactions. For example, there were differences among the participants in their views on directness. Specific settings in which they struggled with adaptation included meetings, conferences, and work-connected social interactions. Key conflicts were between the work values of self-promotion on one extreme, and helping others in the sense of service, on the other. Lastly, many participants discussed why they often kept their deepest concerns hidden, including their perceived differences between themselves and most of their colleagues from professional-managerial class backgrounds. The participants often spoke of a sense of entitlement and taken-for-granted privileges among their colleagues. Many participants described these experiences as alienating and, at times, insulting.

<u>Internal Struggles</u>

A significant issue that participants frequently discussed directly, as well as within the contexts of other themes, was their ongoing internal struggles. These internal civil wars were fought between their desires to succeed and the confusing and sometimes repellant institutional social conventions necessary for success. Elements of these internal struggles included interviewees' early realizations that they were indeed entering a different social game, a game in which most of their colleagues were at home with, yet seemed equally unaware of interviewees' prior lives. The following quote by Al communicates many participants' views:

> …ambivalence is very real…literally; you are caught between these two worlds, not to mention two classes, but between two class worlds…

contradictions between the background of the researcher…and the reality of contemporary academic thought…how difficult it is for someone from a working-class background to become an academic and how difficult it is because, what you're taught is almost the opposite of what we're taught...So, you learn a set of skills that is compatible with life in the working-class, yet it's completely incompatible with life in the academy.

Internal struggles were in some ways exacerbated by the fact that participation in academic contexts offered little or no communicative outlets. For example, Tom was among the participants who reflected on their routine interactions with others who knew very little about participants' financially precarious, and often dangerous, past working lives.

…when I was in high school I worked on a road crew…so I was laying down blacktop and I did that for a good portion of my undergrad career, just putting myself through school. So my sense of what work is, was very different from people that I went through a Ph.D. program, people who were managerial professional class in their background. My idea of work was that I'd come home each day with a blister on my hand and that was my definition of work.

For many participants, early prolonged experiences with limited life options and uncertain occupational outlooks can instill deeply ingrained attendant perceptual habits. This was evident in my participants' stories of their earlier working lives and some of the aspects of those experiences have remained with them to the present day. Vince's comments best illustrate the ingrained memories shared by many participants of prolonged experiences with unstable financial circumstances.

It kind of marked me somehow. For me, unemployment is just, really…just something to be avoided at all costs. I would see people drive on the freeway, and, you know, everybody seemed to have jobs. I had no qualifications, no training. I finally got a job at an airline through a friend. The job was baggage handler, and for me, this job was just fantastic. It was such an improvement over metal refinishing.

Almost all participants talked at length about emotionally painful aspects of adjusting to the social contexts of their new workplace settings. Specifically, they reported experiencing such conflicts usually when they had to function within workplace cultures that operated in ways that

were oblivious to the realities of their past lives. Among the data, Tom's comments best

articulate this issue:

> …at least in my experience, whatever the pain is that's associated with that, the pain is very functional. You know, I mean, being a stranger in a strange land where you feel like you're kind of drifting back and forth into two different foreign lands. One being the land that you grew up in but you no longer belong to, and the other being the land where you see things so differently…It's so difficult to get people to see beyond their petty bourgeois bureaucracy of daily life to start to transform relations in a real way.

Most participants reported experiencing other kinds of internal struggles—internal civil

wars—between their professional success goals and feelings of alienation. The next section

discusses data closest to these particular struggles: feelings of impostorship.

Feelings of Impostorship

Participants often talked about their experiences with feelings of impostorship. Their

experiences included a majority of the issues most commonly found in the literature on

academics from conventionally recognized marginalized groups. Issues included struggles with

self-confidence, the nagging sense that their behaviors were somehow displaying more of the

affectations rather than the genuine substance of academic competencies. Most participants also

talked about their fears of being "found out" as unworthy of their occupation, and their lack of

comfort on and off campus discussing with colleagues their family backgrounds as well as their

pastime activities. Al's following quote most effectively illustrates the combinations of troubling

thoughts that many participants talked about in connection with feelings of impostorship:

> I was thinking one of these days people are going to find out that I'm not kidding anyone, that I'm an intruder: that I'm putting on a show here. You still think about it…my companion…is always telling me that I'm really smart too, but that I don't have enough self-confidence… working-class people are taught that you're not supposed to stand out.
> …What am I doing' here? Why am I here? …and why are so many of my friends from high school on the bottom of the pile? Really, especially with the collapse of the economy and the fact that they chose not to go to college,

you know: good work back then was unionized…What am I doing here? And
why are they there? It really gets to you.

   Secondly, many participants asserted that they required time to gain a sense of comfort

with assuming they had legitimate claims to certain institutional opportunities and perks that

often accompany the job position of college professor. Doug described an experience of

impostorship that occurred during a weekend invitation from a colleague to meet and interact

with the university's football team and staff. As he reflected on his story, Doug expressed his

colleague's demeanor in this setting as that of someone who was confident of his presence there.

In contrast, Doug felt the need for justification other than merely the fact that he was a professor

and in spite of the fact that he had been invited.

> …in some ways I benefit from white middle-class male privilege. Especially
> now that I'm a professor, I look white, middle-class, and male. And I have
> some of those things. And I benefit from that privilege. But if you were to
> stand me next to people who come from that background, or, if I were to be
> in a group with them, they'd immediately recognize me as an impostor.

   Doug's additional comments illustrate important differences in social-class-based notions

of what constitutes a legitimate sense of belonging. He felt that his presence in this setting was

somehow unjustified. For example, the following quote portrays his ingrained sense that he and

his colleague had no merit-based reasons to be present on the sidelines. Yet from a professional-

managerial class context (based on Doug's observations of his colleague's demeanor), his

colleague experienced the setting quite differently.

> …another professor, from another department, had received the opportunity
> to sort of spend a weekend with the football team. It's where you got to go to
> their Friday night workout, and then, go to have dinner with them. And the
> next day, at the game, you got to go to the game with them. And you got to
> watch the game from the field. And it was for two people and so he asked me
> if I wanted to go. So I did.
> But the big difference was, the whole time we were there, with all those
> things, and particularly, going onto the field, he just sort of felt like it was his
> privilege. That, he should be there and there was nothing wrong with him

being there, even though he wasn't a member of the team or hadn't necessarily done anything for the team, or earned that. And he felt entirely comfortable with that, especially on the field. You know, there's like the team's approach things at certain yard markers, and then, photographers and so forth have to stay outside that area.

Doug talked to me about this uneasy feeling he experienced when he and his colleague went onto the field, and his equal astonishment over his colleague's complete comfort. This deeply disturbed Doug. He said that he strongly felt he had no reasonable justification for being there. His discomfort grew to the point where he gradually relocated nearer to where the photographers gathered. He stated that this eased his discomfort because he could more easily imagine his presence as a photographer than as someone closely affiliated with the team.

But I think this is a pretty good example of this sense of entitlement that goes with middle-class and upper middle-class backgrounds. You know: a sense of belonging.

Doug was also among those participants who felt that such feelings compelled them to be overly self-vigilant so as to avoid exhibiting traits learned from their upbringing that might be, from an academic social context, construed as gaffes.

…coming from a working-class background, I've come as a working-class guy who is an English teacher in language and literacy education. So, I know Standard English, and I essentially write Standard English. But, if I'm not paying too much attention, or I'm feeling comfortable, I can slip into the dialect that I was brought up with…You know, "You and me" can come out of my mouth really fast.

Despite their self-vigilance, some participants unconsciously let their working-class mannerisms slip out. Some examples were manifestations of tendencies that were so culturally ingrained that participants only learned of their gaffes after the fact. Doug's quote best illustrates this issue.

I also remember students saying things to me like, "You know, two weeks ago, when you yelled at us…" And I replied, "Wait a minute, I don't remember yelling at you." And they said, "Remember talking about such-

and-such…?" And I said, "Oh, no, that wasn't yelling; I was just being emphatic." I was just being passionate, that's all, "And that's not yelling." I said, "You don't really want to see me yell."

Many participants communicated similar experiences. Some variations included differences regarding the time-frame in their academic lives when they experienced feelings of impostorship most. Some talked about impostorship that occurred more during their graduate training. Others discussed experiencing impostorship in situation-dependent contexts. Some believed their worries about gaffes gradually diminished over time. Nevertheless, most participants offered much to say about feelings of impostorship as being among their most significant struggles during their pre-tenure periods.

<div align="center">Unacknowledged Struggles</div>

A number of participants noted that their negative experiences often occurred in conjunction with the knowledge that their skin color and sex exacerbated their struggles by rendering their true personalities "invisible," which was alienating and insulting. Specifically, nearly all reported struggles that were compounded by academic culture's presumption that they possessed systemic knowledge of their institutions. They struggled within academic social contexts that assumed they had prior knowledge of these contexts. That is, knowledge of academia as a culture and an institution, as well as knowledge of how to take advantage of such settings for the goal of increasing chances of success. Some participants described their institutions' inclusivity criteria as limited to middle and upper middle-class social contexts. Vince's following quote describes his disagreements with colleagues regarding their institutions' diversity practices. His position was that the experiential parameters informing his institution's views limited the definition of diversity in significant ways:

> … people who come from the middle-class really don't see this connection basically. You know? They make no allowance for that difference. The fact

that you have to be acculturated to bureaucracy and things like that in order
to survive in the system. And the people from the working-class are not
accustomed to that.
…We have a committee, for instance, that's forming to make the institution
more inclusive. And it's using a kind of gentler language. But at the meeting
the point was made, "Don't forget that the institution itself is exclusive." So
we have a lot of thinking to do. We may have to change the institution itself,
in order to make it inclusive. We just stay within the same parameters.
Inclusivity is really not one of the values.
…people talk about diversity now, basically what it's moving towards is,
cookie cutter diversity: diverse as long as you are near to our system.
…Which means you have to shed your difference or your diversity…So there
are a lot of contradictions in that…Diverse people: diverse, *similar* people.

Vince described his institution as having failed to account for incoming individuals from

working-class backgrounds who are not experientially equipped for academic social contexts,

knowledge that includes knowing how to survive the realities of the bureaucracy and the rules of

the institution. Participants are often unaware of how to identify and take advantage of various

potential resources and means to succeed.

…It becomes a handicap in a way that, one is used to self-sufficiency, not
having gotten help throughout childhood and adolescence. So you come to
think that that's the normal state of things. And you just tough it out, rather
than ask for help—which is available and provided if you ask for it. But you
don't think of asking. Or you feel insecure maybe.
Whereas if you come from a middle-class background, there is almost an
entitlement or an expectation. There's no stigma to it. That's part of that
ingrained attitude basically.

New and deep differences exist between the duties and prerogatives connected with my

participants' professorial roles as compared to that of their past working-class jobs. Specifically,

they had "made it" as assistant professors, and as such, no longer occupied predominantly

subordinate and heavily overseen and directed job tasks. However, such past experiences tended

to dominate their work habits and mindsets. This illustrates why many participants experienced

discomfort, close to something like role ambiguity, in instances where, as Vince's following

quote describes well, their positions as assistant professors occasionally included the delegation

of tasks to subordinates.

> I had to adjust to some things from my social class background. One of them was that I had a little difficulty delegating work that I was not able to do whether due to limitations of time or ability or whatever. Namely, clerical work. You know, I came in, expecting to do everything myself. And, in the professional world, you hand-off things to the secretaries, you know? So, I had a little problem with that, a little bit. Now, I'm kind of reconciled to that. But initially I just wasn't used to that—coming from my background.

Joe recounted a conflict he had with a department chair who was supposedly also from a

working-class background. This particular conflict highlights the fact that exceptions did exist in

the data. Here, although Joe believed that installing a time clock in his department's secretaries'

office was likely demeaning to the secretaries, his superior disagreed.

> The acting chair of the department…was lamenting the fact that his secretaries were taking long breaks and long lunch hours. And he installed a time clock in the department office! And I said, "So how many of us have actually punched a time clock?" I have put much more than my share of punching a time clock. But he actually said that he did; that, when he was getting through school, you know, way back then, that he actually had summer jobs where he worked.
> So, there were guys that I thought were, *not* one of me, that actually had done that. Yet this guy just couldn't get over the fact that it was demeaning to the staff to install a time clock in the department office.

Joe told me that the key point of his time clock story was not so much his chair's attitude

regarding the time clock, but rather, Joe's own surprise at discovering that he and his chair held

very different work-related associations with time clocks, even though his chair also had prior

blue-collar job experience.

Many participants experienced collegial and administrative interactions that they

perceived as indicative of their institutions' undervaluing of internal human relations. Tom

discussed this issue clearly. He stated that people's values and assumptions about appropriate

treatment of others is deeply rooted in their social class backgrounds. Most participants talked

about interactions with colleagues and administrators in which the participants suspected they

had been the objects of disingenuousness which they felt were in violation of their values of

frankness. In the following quote, Doug shared his overall feelings and experiences in a quote

that is fairly representative of most participants' views.

> I'm used to people being up front with me and straightforward. But I've
> found that many of the undergraduates here, who come from middle-class
> and upper middle-class backgrounds, and also many of the faculty here don't
> operate that way. You know, they operate in code. They might say something
> to your face like, 'yeah, I really enjoyed being with you.' And then later on
> you find: no, not so much.

Gene shared a series of experiences connected with his views about appropriate uses of

directness between professionals at his institution. Gene was among several participants who

expressed impatience and frustrations when their attempts at dispatching duties conscientiously

were encumbered by differences with administrators over definitions of appropriate candor.

Gene had many interesting connected stories; however the following quote best illustrates the

frustrations that many participants expressed regarding unchangeable aspects of institutional

communication contexts:

> My friends and colleagues will tell you that I am a fair and reasonable guy. I
> care about my students and the profession. It may be because of my care that
> I have periodic disappointing interactions with higher-ups. For example, I
> remember an event years ago, one that was based on developments that had
> occurred outside my own classrooms.
>
> One afternoon an administrator who is no longer at this institution entered my
> office and decreed a list of changes that I was to engage—again, none of
> which pertained to my situation. This administrator asked no questions
> specific to my professional connections with the alleged issue; I was simply
> informed of what I was to do related to teaching.
>
> Again, don't misunderstand me here because I believe in live and let live. So
> just to use a figure of speech that describes what I felt only briefly: I don't
> know how he got out of the office alive, but he did.

I think this [person] did not understand is that this [person] needed to have…[here, my participant expresses a vivid hypothetical scenario that a poorly treated working-class employee might fantasize as occurring to the offending source of mortification].

...From what I remember in that setting, if [the administrator] had expressed something even remotely closer to, for example, "I look *forward* to the faculty bringing *their* ideas to bear on this issue…" You know, something like, "Thank you, I look forward to a nice semester..." Do you understand the difference of what I'm getting at here?

…If that [administrator] had any sense of professionalism in the human relations sense, perhaps [the administrator] might have used an approach like, "Here's our current situation…here's what we've been considering…what do you think about our understanding of the situation? Do you have any input you'd like to share?" Or, "Can you help us?" If this had been the case, of course, my response would have been, "Absolutely yes!" Just as it would be to this day… The whole point is I suspect that too many good faculty are still being inflicted with similar treatment by some upper echelons; there are still administrators who seem to be fine with not being honest about anything.

Tom had experienced differences in social interaction values. He shared a story about a series of controversial departmental administrative decisions that had resulted in serious damage to what had once been numerous, close, collegial friendships. Tom was among a number of department members from working-class backgrounds who requested a formal department response for the purpose of openly addressing the need to restore, or heal, the rifts that resulted. Tom claimed that social class background differences among the department's members correlated with differences regarding what formal action should be taken.

The other interesting way in which this played out that after this entire mess had occurred—you know the group that was decidedly working-class and I was part of those—we said, "Look, we have to do something to restore justice here." And the professional managerial upper class and upper middle-class folks, they just wanted to pretend like it never happened. This is like being in AIG [American International Group] and watching a major corporation destroy the economy and then witnessing the executives say, "You know, that's just the way things work."

Lastly, Gene expressed strong views about differences in values he believed often operated parallel to social class lines. Gene saw what he believed was a troubling presence of individuals in academia whose behaviors seemed to be driven by mercenary attitudes. As passionate as Gene's feelings on this issue were, he qualified his opinion by stating his own comparative lack of such attitudes, as well as his general sentiments about those in the upper echelons of his institution's administration:

> …I think that, in a society where everybody seems to be equal, the borderline psychopath-types win…I love all my neighbors, but I can't stand some aspects of the university. I can't stand people in power.
> Maybe I just don't like authority, but the people in authority are constantly calculating. Or maybe they don't even calculate; they just react. You know: "What is this social situation?" "How should I behave socially in this situation?" "How should I behave socially in that situation?" They're never going to say something that they may have to take back, or…I don't know.
> So, I think they're in some category of psychopath: the people who have little empathy for other people are the people who are winning. I don't even know what it means to win because I don't want to be a boss of anything. So, that's sort of what's going on.

The next section describes in more detail some of the conflicts many participants experienced regarding the ways they attempted to accomplish work in accordance with their primary values of helping others. This was side to side with a number of colleagues whose work practices indicated primary values of self-promotion.

<u>Internal Struggles Regarding Work and Social Values</u>

Nearly all participants discussed their concerns about what they saw as significant pressures to behave in ways that conflicted with their working-class values. They struggled with conflicting notions of acceptable work and social-related practices. The main concerns included attempts at working out differences between their own values of service to others and the professional values of self-promotion. In addition, some expressed their views about producing substantive work they felt good about, while also sometimes falling prey to misapplications of

their working-class values in ways that threatened the emergence of self-inflicted burn-out.

Lastly, most participants discussed, in varying degrees of explicitness, the importance that they

remained professionally conscious of the differences in privilege among students and colleagues.

Doug's comments serve as a fairly representative overview of most participants' sentiments on

this issue.

> …I don't care about the things they care about. My issues are different, what
> I think is important is different, and particularly, the measures important to
> their sense of values: of values about respect, of values about treating people
> fairly, about seeing the value of education much more important than the
> money we assign to it.

Many participants stated that their values toward teaching were possibly not

representative of those of their overall institutions. In almost all the interviews, they voluntarily

discussed what they saw as differences in teaching philosophies between themselves and most

colleagues. Further, many expressed objections over the fact that their institutions operated in

ways that allowed for academics to attain notable successes while investing minimal time and

energy to their teaching. Sam's quote represents this issue well. He discussed some of the ways

in which his professional values prioritized students' needs, and that this might not have

generally been the case from the overall institutional context within which he operated.

> …teaching is perceived internally to the university as "not work." When
> academics talk about their "work" they're always talking about their
> publishing. But somehow, teaching is supposed to be something you do with
> the left hand. Teaching is something, you get grants, so you don't have to do.
> And teaching undergraduates is something you get graduate students to do.
> And so, it's just part of the fabric of the world.
> …but the truth of the matter is, at least at a research one university,
> professors spend almost as much time as they can getting away from the
> classroom, getting away from the students, so they can publish their articles.
> And the most senior professors are the ones that have the least to do with the
> students who need them most, which are people learning how to write and
> read.

Along the same lines, but within a different context, Vince expressed disagreement with his colleagues regarding criteria for his institution's pending merit system proposal. Vince believed that the proposed merit guidelines excluded aspects for recognizing professional activities to which Vince had devoted much of his professional energies. He perceived some aspects in the merit proposal as essentially mechanisms that would function in ways that rewarded self-promotional behaviors, and might indirectly function to overlook the contributions of professors who devoted proportionately more of their working lives to teaching and mentoring.

> …we have debates, departmental debates on how to apportion merit. And my view, which I was ultimately to say at a department meeting was, "Well, here, we're bean-counting about crumbs." And it was very demoralizing because it ends up being a ranking system. Salaries are public, it's a big institution, and we get the list of everybody's salaries. There were years when somebody got, say, 29 dollars more than someone else, over one year. What's the point of that?

Many participants expressed objections to additional aspects of their respective institutions' rewards systems. Some expressed indignation over some of their colleagues who, some participants believed, demonstrated questionable work-related practices that were nevertheless rewarded by their institutions. The following quote by Ray begins with a fairly representative sentiment shared by a number of participants:

> It seems to me that the people who more often succeed in academia are those who are expert at self-promotion and accurate assessment of which way the academic winds are blowing rather than those who simply try to be the best teachers and the most honest researchers.

> One faculty person that comes to mind—I'll refer to this individual as "Person X"—also reminds me of my once naive idealism with academia: we are all searching or learning, truth, purity, and so on. Anyway, this individual I'm thinking about at the moment, personifies my discovery that academia is just as filled with bullshit artists as other professions. Maybe more.

Person X is neither good at teaching, writing, or research. However, this individual knows the art of self-promotion to a T. This character is one of the most politically adept people I have ever known. This faculty member is someone who has an incredible knack for being where one will be noticed by the right people. This Nob's ability to pop up in photographs with upper administration, publicity-makers, and other attention-worthy people is uncanny. This led to one of my colleagues making the comment that Person X was just like the Woody Allen character in Zelig: present at every newsworthy event in history.

Most participants also reported differences in work-related values they experienced outside of campus settings. Matt specifically described how he actively avoided self-promoting professional behaviors that occurred in after-hours settings, and he tended to question the importance of colleagues' advertising their work-related accomplishments in these settings.

The example that came to mind again is a previous one about professional meetings, academic conferences. It was not uncommon for me to go to those and participate in the parts that I was there to participate in, to the extent that I needed to justify the university helping me to travel, but then I would go off, you know, and to do my own thing. Listen to some good music or something.
It felt more real to me somehow than visiting with these people who were trying to impress each other, talking about their latest book…and people playing one-upmanship. That never felt comfortable to me and I don't know, if or to what extent, that has anything to do with my background. It kind of felt that it did. It felt phony.

Doug explicitly talked about why he declined the position of Chair of his department. He valued work that constituted something more than merely meeting a formal requirement. He viewed the job of Chair as a situation wherein there would be a low probability that he could function in ways that in his view, would constitute meaningful work.

But, I also find myself avoiding leadership decisions. Often people want me to be in leadership positions, which is nice, but I don't like them, because generally you become middle management. Right? And in middle management, you end up talking the company line. And so I try to avoid having to do that because I don't want to be—because if you go with middle management, and you become the person who tries to fight issues, you get marginalized, so you become ineffective.

> And if you don't fight the issues, then you get coopted, and you're no good to anybody, in my mind.
> So, yeah, I could have been department head, and I say, "Luckily, I had a heart attack." And it wasn't a bad heart attack, but it was enough of a heart attack that I could say, "You know, I don't need this extra stress in my life." And I was really reluctant to do the job anyway, and, "No, I'm not going to do the job."

So it appears that these individuals have been expressing various measures of their work values. For instance many made conscious efforts during our interviews to communicate in various ways that they were 'not afraid of hard work.' However, interviews did include discussions about ways that some of these well-intended, motivated participants at times found themselves falling victim to their own definitions and meanings of work. The following story that Doug talked about particularly stands out.

Doug had formed a reading group for which he sent a campus-wide invitation to all academics from working-class backgrounds to join. Although 14 people originally joined the group and participated in fruitful readings and discussions, within a few weeks, attendance markedly decreased to the point where Doug finally decided it prudent to terminate the project. During the time leading up to the cancellation, those who did not attend also made efforts to email Doug in advance, to repeatedly communicate two concerns. First, the members emphasized how much they appreciated their mutually affirming discussions. Second, their excuses for absences almost always appealed to pressing work-related duties.

The next interesting development occurred when, soon after Doug had notified members of his decision to end the group, he received a significant number of emails in which members emphasized their support for his initial formation of the group, reiterated their regret over its ending, and reiterated that their work duties had gotten in the way of their continued

participation. Doug's reflections of the matter illustrate well the issue of how working-class

notions of work can backfire for working-class academics.

> …when you come from a working-class background, you get into these
> habits where it's expected that you have to work, and you do work: work is
> significant. But then, work becomes paramount, even above, sort of, taking
> some time for yourself.
> …This was about taking some time for themselves. To think about these
> issues. But, they wouldn't keep it sacred because there's always something
> on the job that they felt was more important than taking care of themselves.
> So, in retrospect, as a kind of post-mortem on the events, I started thinking
> about it in how working-class background, sort of killed our ability to have a
> working-class group.

Doug reflected on this experience of his reading group as a kind of casualty of being a

working-class academic. That is, their working-class notions of work had compelled them to

place higher priority on work rather than engage in a healthy and needed activity.

Some participants openly expressed strong convictions regarding a sense of duty to

helping others, a priority that the following quote of Tom further implied is generally lacking in

academic culture. Tom expressed his sense of duty to invest his career at least in partial service

to addressing social class equality issues.

> The other part of it, though, is, and I'm not sure how or what slant other
> working-class academics would put on this, but I'd say for me, coming from
> a working-class family means that a continual awareness of what working-
> class life is like means not only responsibility on my part to make that life
> better, but it means that my consciousness will never be colonized in the
> same way that the yuppies will be.

In sum, most interviewees had experienced struggles in terms of their awareness that

academia rewarded certain forms of professional self-promotional behaviors that often conflicted

with many participants' values of helping others. The following, final section of theme 2

discusses stories about how and why many participants often chose to keep their concerns silent

and simply endure the stresses connected with learning and adjustment.

Keeping the Deepest Concerns Silent

Many participants learned that they often had to control their indignation and keep silent regarding issues of deepest concern. The data describes many participants as individuals who grew up seeing education as one thing, then, as assistant professors, encountered experiences different than what they anticipated. These participants had to contend with aspects of academic culture they found distasteful and at times, somewhat disillusioning. Much of what they had to say orbited around being frequently reminded that many colleagues seemed to take a number of past and present privileges for granted. Participants also talked about their tendencies to avoid certain topics of casual conversation with colleagues. And finally, some interviewees told me about their uneasiness with their work settings' routinized ways of interacting in collaborative tasks such as committee work. Doug's quote is an accurate representation of many participants' sentiments.

> I have to deal with what I call "up-campus" people…and hanging with those
> people just drives me nuts. Because…they might be very liberal, but they still
> do this from a very privileged standpoint. And I struggle with that. Because
> in many ways they don't really get a sense of the realities of somebody
> having to struggle with their lives, or to figure out the university.

Somewhat connected to Doug's feelings, Tom's comments best describe many participants' understandings of how differences in social class backgrounds can play out in terms of work-related politics. Tom stated that, because of his working-class background, he has been comparatively more sensitive and vigilant than most of his colleagues in matters of gains and losses that transpire between individual interests.

> …I mean, they take it all for granted to begin with, they take institutional
> politics for granted, politics at the level of the university as simply being a
> game in which their own interests are going to be realized or they're going to
> lose a few battles, but politics is just a game. If you're working-class, politics
> is a battle. It's a fucking war. If you don't win the war, it means you're

losing the war. And that plays out in real material ways. So you have to win the God damn war.

Similar views run through much of the data: differences between most participants and their institutions regarding what it means to be socially conscious. Gene expressed his feelings in stark terms:

> The upper classes are real thugs…my wife was reading a book about Victorian England and they essentially were thugs too, but I think they knew it. I think that these people today think they're very sensitive.

Most participants described their experiences in ways that portrayed how their professional experiences were often difficult to process independently from not only their previous working-class lives, but also from their concurrent working-class social experiences. Comments often described a lack of familiarity and comfort with colleagues' conversation topics. Among the many comments on this issue, Joe's perspective is perhaps the most informative.

> Well, I don't mix well. I think that's the easiest way to put it…I remember the hundreds of lunchtime conversations with the other faculty members, who described their wonderful chances: "Oh yeah, I went to the opera this weekend." Or, "We have season tickets to the Guthrie." You know, this kind of stuff….And, I'm hearing about, "…going to this concert…" and, "…going to that concert…" and I'm thinking, "What the fuck?" You know? That was not my life.
> And so, while I do have a nice little liberal arts degree, it just isn't who I really am. I've always found it hard to say anything. Because if they're not talking about my kinds of experience, it was hard to, you know…I'm sitting there thinking, "I can't wait for Star Trek to show up on Thursday night."

In addition to personal accounts, interviewees also discussed family background differences between themselves and their colleagues in a number of settings. Sam shared his thoughts in two contexts. First from an institutional perspective and also from his estimation of the general publics' perceptions:

…even though we can explain enormous quantities of difference (for example, we ran a regression of what makes people different in American culture, and social class accounts for about 70, 80 percent), but we don't talk about it, and what we do is we disguise it by calling it merit, and hard work and intelligence.

…This is the way in fact that American culture looks at it. "You come from *that* street?" "You come from *that* neighborhood?" "Your father did *what*?" …And all of the sudden it's "fair" and you feel like, "Okay, I got this stigma: I'm fine as long as I stay in the context in which I was born." If you venture out, then you've got some explaining to do.

Tom discussed pressures to conform to a system that is often unaware of how outsiders experience it. But he also told me about how he gradually learned to take advantage of his professional academic training and applied it to controlling his indignation and discipline himself in ways that contributed to his successes.

We know what it's like to be in a social context where these other professional managerial folks operate on a daily basis, and there are "feeling rules" for what you're expected to have and how you're supposed to display those. And in a professional context, that professional context usually demands that that feeling is kept under control. Anger in particular is kept under control.

…The anger is there because of the degradation of people in the laboring process. If you have a boss at work that's always joking or talking with you as though you're a dog or some farm animal, treating you not necessarily like you're dirt, but letting you know that there's a boundary.

…but the anger doesn't go away…You're still fucking pissed off…That doesn't go away.

So what you learn to do, and again this gets back to being a stranger in a strange land…You just learn how to channel it. So, we can learn how to do that. I mean, it takes practice to get to the point where you can shake your head and nod when you know that resisting an idea in a committee meeting is only going to either lead to outcomes that you don't want, or bring backlash in a way that may be harmful to whatever agenda you're trying to create.

In general, my interviewees perceived certain contexts at least partly through working-class sensibilities. Most experienced some institutional norms as unwittingly functioning in ways they thought distasteful. Yet simultaneously, many also experienced a sense that such realities

were culturally entrenched to the extent that, too often, self-censure was their most practical recourse.

Theme 3: Learning to Work within the System to Their Own Advantage

Nearly all participants indicated that in spite of their significant struggles with gaining academic cultural fluency and enduring perceived indignities, they have also experienced substantial rewards. The first section of Theme 3 addresses ways participants found ways to do work that reflected their values. Some took advantage of this more so upon gaining tenure, to devote their available resources and skills to issues that remained important to them. The second section discusses ways that many participants retained their values of service and their underlying working-class memories in ways that sensitized them to the needs of students from similar backgrounds. They met the established standards of their profession yet did so while incorporating their working-class backgrounds into their pedagogies. Finally, Theme 3 describes how most participants developed ways to put their training and skills not only to enhance their own professional successes, but doing so in ways they believed helped students, colleagues and the profession better address equality issues within their institutions.

Research and Teaching

Many participants talked about the ways their research was intrinsically rewarding. They focused their research areas on matters directly or indirectly intended to contribute to understandings of social equality issues rather than merely serving perfunctory functions. Also, many emphasized positive aspects and opportunities their positions included. The dramatic increase in job-related autonomy was a frequently talked about topic. Al expressed his appreciation of the potential advantages of having a working-class background: a unique deep appreciation of his professorial life and the opportunities that the position entails.

Being a college professor's wonderful because you get paid to do exactly
what you want to do. We learn, and analyze and stuff and being able to do
work on the very subject that kind of has defined your life. An incredible
asset, opportunity.

In general, over their careers, most participants developed approaches intended to help

others. For some, these approaches extended to their research. Matt's comments serve as a good

illustration regarding the ways most applied their unique combinations of social class

experiences to research.

…I did the things I needed to do in terms of research, publication and so
forth but I hope I did it in a way consistent with my values and
background….I found ways, I think fairly successful over the years to relate
even the research and writing part of being a professor, to things that I
believe in, cared for…and felt like I make a bit of a contribution… Not
something I was doing to impress an administrator or get a promotion…and
cared more about the concerns of common people…work to improve the
quality of life…I did work consistent with my values.

Vince described his research as connected to important social equality issues yet he also

communicated disappointment in his institution's professional rewards systems.

…it's not the case that I'm don't believe in research…on the contrary…I
self-defined what I wanted to do in terms of tenure, at some cost to my
career. Some people who were hired at the same time as myself had a regular
progression to full professor...in fact, the statement was made in a department
meeting that a colleague needed to do more writing and the colleague's reply
was, "Well, if I'm not getting rewarded by it then I'll stop right here." So,
that shows that it's perfunctory, jumping through hoops for the system.

In general, all participants found ways to devote their skills and available resources to

issues that remained important to them. They worked at synthesizing their various forms of

knowledge with new experiences in ways that gradually constituted professional strengths. Many

talked about how they merged their past and present experiences in service to their teaching and

mentoring activities. They talked about their values of helping students to increase their own

chances of getting through the higher education system. Sam was someone among most of my

interviewees who told me that they used their working-class pasts in ways that enhanced

teaching practices. Sam's following quote best communicates most participants' concerns

regarding ways that social class issues played out in their students' lives—helping their students'

see and learn forms of academic social class knowledge that might increase their chances for

success.

> I think the fact that when we teach children that, what they were given as a
> gift is actually a burden, that is a violation of something deeply human in
> people. It's wrong; it's insidious. And so, it's something that we just have to
> deal with, and see, and name, and then, as teachers, as professors, help other
> people see it…

Sam defined culture as a kind of gift in the sense that it is an essential element of being

human. He said that he gradually arrived at the view that each person's cultural orientation is

predetermined by social class background.

> …and we are never going to quite get over that. It is not something we have
> to get past, it's the gift that we were given to live with, to bear. And, in some
> ways, exploit.

In their interactions with students, many participants also applied their values of social

equality by nurturing non-hierarchical relationships with students. Joe's story of his decision to

do contract grading represents this point well. He developed formal criteria for those students

who desired a specific final grade in his classes. If a student desired an "A," the student

contracted with Joe to perform work specified in advance.

> And I was a composition person so my chair and many members of the
> faculty in the department of course, were happy with that. You know, they
> want to see something new, they want to see innovation.
> …except for one of my colleagues...And the idea of…students choosing their
> grade, negotiating their grade, any such things were bogus to him.
> And we had our series of memos. You know, the memo fight. And I got
> support from my colleagues, and that's what essentially got him to back
> down. He was a senior member in a lot of ways, and old school. It was ugly,
> but I got support.

Several interviewees also interacted with students in ways that spoke genuinely to them. That is, to the students' own, sometimes similar working-class experiences. Matt told me that he has worked with some colleagues who lorded their education credentials over others both on and off campus, colleagues who often interacted with aloof demeanors. One example Matt shared was a former colleague who insisted that his car mechanic addressed him as, "Dr. So-and-So." In contrast Matt told me:

> …I *hope* I managed to treat all folks with equal respect, including a custodian…who drew a pencil portrait of Abigail Adams I have framed out here in my office, and another…who gave me fishing gear when I retired. …and I think it's because at a small, regional state university I ran into a higher percentage of students who were of similar backgrounds to mine. So I could identify with them and I think I was probably better at working with them, helping them…

Participants discussed other ways their teaching approaches were sensitive to working-class students' needs. Joe stated that on the first day of every English composition class, he shares with his students his own less-than-stellar experiences when he took Composition. His intent was minimization of the chances of making students feel inferior to their academic surroundings.

> [As a present day instructor] I enjoy [teaching a composition class] like this: telling the students, "I got a "C" in this class." I now teach that class. So, it works very well, when I'm dealing with students who come from similar backgrounds. They really enjoy that. They feel like, "Oh, this isn't something that came easy to you either!" They feel like I can help them.

Some participants also applied their special combinations of social class experiences to broader, yet teaching-related realities. For example, Gene talked about his disagreements with upper echelons regarding significant factors in students' success rates. He speculated that his institution's student success initiatives repeatedly overlook pertinent off-campus issues

> …The pool of math teachers are under all kinds of pressure to perform and produce… [One] reason why people don't learn math is because they are

beset with social problems…crack cocaine has much more to do with why
people don't learn math than math education.

Some participants stated that along with their struggles, luck played a role in their

academic careers. This knowledge added to their sense of obligation to provide students with

help in order to maximize their students' chances for success. Sam's comments illustrate this

sense of duty.

…Because it was the teaching, and the teachers who helped me, find my way
out of the steel mills: the young professors who took some really misshapen,
raw material, and gave me the tools I needed to get out of the steel mills; that,
I wanted to be them. I wanted to do for students what they had done for me.
And I never got over that.

So, in a number of ways, many participants retained their values of service and their

underlying working-class memories in ways that sensitized them to the needs of student from

similar backgrounds. They met the established standards of their profession yet did so while

incorporating their working-class backgrounds into their pedagogies.

From Cultural Deficits to Cultural Assets

In general, most participants discussed the ways that they have developed to use their

working-class backgrounds as assets. Many learned that their initial problems had been instances

of their own misapplications of working-class knowledge to academic social contexts. They

gradually developed ways to meld their previously existing knowledge with their academic

experiences in ways that constituted professional strengths.

There was a time when Sam struggled with conflicting feelings between his desire to be

able to talk about his past and his concerns, and the possible negative consequences that might

result from such discussions in academic social contexts. Gradually he came to believe that his

working-class experiences were not necessarily objects of shame—not things best kept to one's

self—but valid experiences that can enhance his career. He also came to the conclusion that he

could use his academic social knowledge in methodical ways that enabled him to speak on

academic culture's own terms yet do so in ways he felt were authentic. Sam elaborated on how

he retained different experiential aspects of both his early and present lives in ways to

reconstruct a more comfortable professional identity for himself:

> …if, somebody is coming to know me, like having a new colleague or friend,
> and you start telling stories about your life. I talk about the steel mills, and I
> have other things to talk about too. But I'm not, if you will, ashamed of it
> anymore. And there was a time in my life where I didn't know how to talk
> about it among academics because they didn't know how to talk about it.
> …I've seen hot, beams of steel—at 2:30 in the morning when I was working
> the midnight shift—rise up, off the roller that shapes them, like a snake. And
> I've seen men working as the sparks and the chips of steel fell off. And I've
> gotten up at 5:15 in the morning, and put on my working clothes, and
> grabbed my hard hat, and driven to the steel mills with my father. And *that* is
> something that they don't have.

Tom succinctly described how most participant's stories and reflections here have been

accounts of learning new knowledge in ways that allowed them to synthesize their two different

social class experiences into new knowledge that exploited and respected both.

> …if you're working-class and you had no education, all you can understand
> is the injustice in your own, local environment which is your daily
> experience; you can't see what's producing it…if you're an academic and
> you have a Ph.D., and you're not working-class, most of the time it means
> you may be able to understand the macro-political…conventions of that, but
> you have no understanding of how people in everyday life experience it, it's
> just an abstraction to you…and the beauty, you know, of having a Ph.D.
> when you're a working-class academic is you can see all of those levels and
> their interconnections all at one time. There's a fullness to that understanding,
> though. And the fullness is something that I wouldn't give up for anything.

In general, most participants developed ways to put their training and skills not only to enhance

their own professional successes, but doing so in ways they believed helped students, colleagues

and the profession better address equality issues. In a social consciousness sense, the data

illustrates one small topical area of their professional endeavors.

Summary

This chapter described the interview data along three themes. Interviewees talked about how they struggled to learn academia's unwritten rules: what to say and how to say it. Yet for many this also took time and emotional energy. Most talked about stresses including feelings of impostorship, and conflicting feelings concerning appropriate behaviors. Specific settings they struggled with included meetings, conferences, and work-connected social interactions. Many told me why they often kept their deepest concerns hidden, including their perceived differences between themselves and most of their colleagues. And yet, the majority also talked about how in spite of their struggles, they experienced substantial rewards. They found ways to do work that reflected their values and many retained underlying working-class knowledge in ways that sensitized them to the needs of students from similar backgrounds. Tenure attainment meant they had satisfied the established standards of their profession yet did so while incorporating their working-class backgrounds into their work lives.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

<u>Introduction</u>

This study examined the work-related experiences of working-class white male academics who attained tenure. The time segment was between participants' time of hire and tenure attainment using ethnographic methods. I pursued my research questions through in-depth interviews. The present study's research questions were aimed at investigating the participants' experiences of learning about and successfully addressing informal, unwritten knowledge of a new and foreign academic workplace culture.

In order to pursue this study's research questions competently, I asserted that generally speaking, academia operates according to a professional-managerial-class orientation, and also asserted that shared definitions and meanings of social interactions can operate powerfully in identifying group membership.

My findings are generalized in the following four statements: most participants experienced struggles related to social class, in gaining tenure; most participants entered academia without adequate cultural knowledge; most participants experienced academic work and socially-related practices as contentious with their working-class sensibilities; and all participants gradually strategized internal truces between their past and present cultural orientations toward their eventual goal of tenure.

The next section of this chapter examines four aspects of participants' experiences that conflicted most with academic culture: language use; self-promoting behaviors; work-related politics; and workplace attire. This section also touches on some similarities and differences between the present study's findings and those in the literature.

Language

Nearly all participants' experiences with gaining knowledge of academic language were similar to those of other working-class academics in the literature as well as women and minority academics (Bowels & Gintis, 1976; Flax, 1990; Martin, 2006; Piper, 1995). However, what is striking are the contexts in which participants described their needs to learn academic language use: they described learning academic language in terms of disassociating themselves from working-class language as much if not more than in terms of associating themselves with academic language (Baker, 2006; Belanoff, 1993; Freire, 1973; Gergen, 1991; Heath, 1983; hooks, 1993; Kaufman, 2003; Martin, 2006; Piper 1995).

Self-Promotional Personas

Many participants discussed academia's meanings and definitions of self-promoting behaviors as initially in conflict with their working-class values of humility, and these findings were similar to those in the literature on women and minority academics (Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Participants learned that the nature of academic work necessitated developing social capital in such forms as networking, and equally important, that they often communicate both within and beyond their departments in ways that call attention to professional acumen. For instance, academic contexts often expect professional personas to exhibit self-references about such things as recent research, publications, and other work-related activities.

The academic culture often further expects critical exchanges which commonly feature taking colleagues to task in the pursuit of professional excellence. However, some participants had significant difficulties internalizing the culture's meanings and definitions of this activity

because at times they involved behaviors that indicated different intentions according to working-class culture (Cannon, 2006; Curry, 2002; Long, et al, 2000; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). Specifically many participants had learned early in their lives that openly challenging cohorts is often perceived as provoking a dispute (Conquergood, 1991; Garger, 1995). Such meanings and definitions were often difficult to unlearn, yet this had to be done for increasing professional success chances.

Work-related Politics

Most participants shared a general sense of aversion to behaviors they believed were mere political maneuvering in the furtherance of one's career. The literature described such behaviors as distasteful and unsettling demonstrations of careerism (Rothe, 2006; Wilson, 2006; Ryan & Sackrey, 1984). Both the literature and the present study's participants discussed their disillusionment with the discovery that such behaviors can and do garner professional rewards, and further disappointment from discovering that many colleagues from professional-managerial-class backgrounds entered academia already familiar with and skilled at such behaviors. In contrast, most participants' initially entered the professoriate assuming that academic work itself would be the paramount criterion in their institution's reward system.

Workplace Attire

The literature included somewhat of a range of opinions regarding the degree of and rationale for formal workplace attire (Dews & Leste-Law, 1995; Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006). However, most participants' views differed significantly from much of the literature. Nearly all held fairly strong allegiances to dressing comparatively informally.

Most participants associated formal workplace attire with their working-class-based aversions to authority and formality (i.e. "suits"). From another perspective, their orientations

can be thought of in terms of their working-class identities competing with that of traditional college professor. In this sense, identities can encompass a number of competing criteria such as regionalism, marital status, religious affiliations, and in the case of the present study, social class (Bradley, 1996; Grusky & Weeden, 2008; Hout, 2008; Pakulski, 2005).

<p style="text-align: center;">A More Equal Opportunity Impostor Syndrome</p>

Nearly all participants had at some point experienced similar symptoms of impostorship found in the literature on conventionally recognized marginalized groups in higher education (Clance, et al, 1995; Rothe, 2006). Several discussed a lack of confidence; the tendency to blame themselves; and nagging feelings that they had no right to certain perks that are routine for their positions.

The most general symptoms were related to lack of a sense of belonging in their academic contexts. These symptoms included fears that they will eventually be discovered as frauds and a strong reluctance to discuss their family backgrounds as well as leisure activities with colleagues (Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Long, et al, 2000; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). In settings where participants were inadvertently within earshot of such conversations, many responded with silence or feigned the need to leave for some pressing appointment.

<p style="text-align: center;">Lack of Social Support Structures</p>

Like all individuals, participants needed to be with and mutually supported by, forms of social capital that they could not, or had difficulty experiencing, in academic contexts. However, my findings suggest very little evidence that participants had knowledge of or access to the kinds of support structures that are rightly available to conventionally recognized marginalized groups. Many participants tended to feel more of a sense of cohort affiliation with others from working-class background, be they faculty or staff, and a number of women and minority academic

scholars wrote about similar experiences (Bourdieu, 1986; Bronstein & Ramaley, 2002; Collay, 2002; Long, et al, 2000; Rothe, 2006).

Competent mentors can be key sources of support, yet I suspect that working-class white males often enter academia without the presence of adequate role models. The few participants in the present study who did have access to helpful mentors described themselves as extremely lucky (Koch, 2002).

<u>Potential Self-Sabotaging Pitfalls</u>

In this study, working-class-based associations with work sometimes operated against participants. Findings suggested three areas in which working-class-based associations with work were misapplied in ways that complicated their struggles to move forward in their careers. The three areas were: behaviors of overproduction; the tendency to not ask for help; and working-class-based expressions of anger.

A significant issue for many participants was their difficulties adjusting to professional-managerial-class associations with work. In academic culture, beyond being a source of income, work can be rewarding as a means of intellectual growth and at times even pleasurable (Cannon, 2000). Most participants indicated that they required time to become comfortable with this kind of working context, given their ingrained habits from prior years of physically exhausting, and sometimes even dangerous occupations. Put simply, it takes time to readjust oneself from years of associating work with the notion that if one is not exhausted, one has not performed legitimate work.

Although all three areas are also in the literature, I suggest that a good percentage of my participants expressed additional issues. Their engagements in overproduction seemed to be behaviors that they had consciously or otherwise engaged to appease additional, deeply set

working-class associations with "legitimate" work (Penrod, 1997). A few participants did make allusions to needing to experience observable, concrete evidence of their work (Weis, 2004). Further, their feelings of self-worth may have at least in part depended on such work-related experiences (Bronstein & Ramaley, 2002; Christopher, 1995)

Not Seeking Assistance

A number of participants found it difficult to ask for help. The literature on professional women from working-class backgrounds speculated as to why women in one study exhibited similar behaviors. Previous findings suggested that the tendency to not ask for help was based on women's beliefs that their feelings of impostorship were normal (Clance, et al, 1995). In a bit of a departure, some participants expressed their reasons for not asking for help because of ingrained working-class habits learned from backgrounds wherein help was simply rarely at hand. It's just the way working-class work contexts can be. Yet I suspect that this issue may be one in which participants' prior working-class-based male gender roles combined in ways that manifested in the tendency to not ask for help.

As young working-class males, many of my participants may have internalized the idealized "tough" male image, one who rarely asks for help out of fear of the working-class stigma of weakness. However, as the next section describes, in addition to being problematic, such cultural knowledge operating in academia can create additional self-imposed obstacles. Many participants made conscious efforts during our interviews to communicate in various ways that they were "not afraid of hard work." I suspect that most participants' backgrounds featured exposure to valorizations of working long, hard days. With such backgrounds, it may not have been easy to shake feelings of anomie or anxiousness in their new work contexts.

Working-Class-Based Expressions of Anger

Most participants discussed a variety of their experiences and topics in passionate or at least in serious voice tones. Yet many also noted the importance of governing behaviors and a few recommended avoiding working-class-based definitions of anger. Working-class-based definitions of anger are perceived in academic contexts in ways that constitute politically suicidal behaviors. A few fragments exist in the literature on this subject; one discusses how such behaviors can be perceived as evidence of character flaws, or acting uncivil (Martin, 2006; Piper, 1995). During the present study's interviews, over half of my participants' speaking voices either began in a reserved tone, and gradually grew more emphatic, or gained emotional energy early in the interviews—while I basically remained silent, occasionally saying only "I know what you mean." Or, "A-huh" as the interviews progressed. I suspect that I was witness to rare opportunities for my participants to candidly express issues with political immunity, issues that may have been penned-up for some time.

Not Completely Irreconcilable Differences

The literature includes accounts of ways that academics from working-class backgrounds gradually integrated professional identities from both their past and present working lives (Cannon 2006; Collins, 1986: 14-32; Gardner, 1993; hooks, 1993; Koch, 2002; Rubin, 1976). In the present study, although most participants stated that they continued to experience challenges in reconciling their two cultural orientations before and after tenure attainment, in some sense they seemed to have gradually developed functional truces between their internal struggles toward their goals of professional success. Most participants stated that they valued the practice of doing research aimed at improving understandings of working-class-related social issues. Further, some stated that their values of explicitly identifying the relevance and

connections between their backgrounds and their research topics in publications. Similarly, a few working-class scholars in the literature have argued for the importance and legitimacy of explicitly integrating backgrounds into research publications, and use experiences to inform research (Cannon, 2002; Rubin, 1976; Rubin, 1994).

Most participants' teaching philosophies were closer to those of working-class academics in the literature. Participants described their teaching interests as efforts to help others from less-privileged backgrounds as well as the higher education system in general (Grimes & Morris, 1997; Koch, 2002). A notable specific connected to the literature was in most participants' explicitly stated teaching practices aimed at avoiding classroom personas that might generate excessively hierarchical relationships with students (Cannon, 2002; Collings, 1986; Gardner, 1993; hooks, 1993; Koch, 2002).

Summary of Discussion

Almost all participants discussed the political power that comes with tacit knowledge of academic culture, especially its unwritten social interaction expectations as a useful means of deciphering and identifying the otherwise elusive nature of most participants' outsider experiences. Nearly all participants reported to have learned early in life, familiarity and comfort with unwritten working-class social interactions which functioned to indicate group membership and success chances. Yet upon entrance to academic culture, these same working-class-based expectations that had been validated in their backgrounds, were invalidated in academic culture, in terms of identifying them as outsiders, both to themselves internally and from the larger academic contexts (Meyer, et al, 1977).

Directions for Future Study

Given the findings of the present study, more research should examine both working-class academics who failed to gain tenure, as well as other participants who believed that they experienced little or no cultural adjustments in route to successful tenure attainment. Either way, future studies might look into the roles of some of the struggles and successes addressed in the present study as starting points. For instance, academic language conventions, impostorship, and their particular kinds of invisibility, could be pursued.

The impostor syndrome or impostor phenomenon needs refinement in the area of social class cultural differences. Most of the present study's participants indicated similar experiences as those in previous studies on upwardly mobile women and minorities. Clance and her colleagues (1995) stated that the women in her study came from backgrounds that had socialized them to assume specific identities that later caused feelings of impostorship once they left their home cultures' surroundings. Working-class family backgrounds tend to not actively encourage intellectually oriented activities in their children. As a result, adults from working-class backgrounds tend to not have incorporated intellectually-oriented habits into their children's identities (Long, et al, 2000). Given that much of the previous research in this area focuses on the raising of working-class daughters, I suggest further investigations into working-class families' orientations, or lack thereof, regarding intellectually oriented habits of their sons.

For those working-class white male academics who believed they experienced few problems with cultural adjustments in route to tenure attainment, perhaps they gained the kinds of cultural knowledge crucial for success in the professoriate during their prior employment experiences, resulting in partial assimilation of key forms of cultural knowledge necessary for success in the professoriate. Working-class academics rarely experience internalization of

academic aspects onto their overall identity (Wilson, 2006). Perhaps during graduate school training, some have been privy to a number of experiences that were significant for gaining knowledge of various formal and informal ways in which an academic department and its faculty operate.

Another avenue for future research might be to reexamine criteria for diversity initiatives in American higher education. Working-class academics can incorporate their unique ways of perceiving social contexts toward the goal of contributing to a more culturally inclusive academic environment. I suggest that the present study's conceptualization of social classes in cultural terms may be useful in informing future diversity and inclusivity initiatives in American higher education. This approach—defining culture in terms of shared meanings and definitions of social interactions and connecting it to social class inequalities—may be particularly helpful in increased understandings of how inequalities often operate invisibly.

A last reoccurring question pertains to participants' preferred classroom teaching personas. Specifically, the present study has discussed information in both the data and previous literature regarding some participants' need to retain certain aspects of their background-based identities and their concomitant aversions to feigning some of the traditional behavioral affectations of "college professor." In conjunction, the present study has also touched on some working-class academics' suspicions of various forms of authority, formality, and in particular, their aversions to political gamesmanship and experiences with subduing working-class-based feelings of anger. Future studies might usefully explain these individuals' interaction styles in the classroom for possible identifiable patterns. Perhaps these individuals' teaching personas exhibit more of their working-class identities than the interaction styles they employ with most colleagues and administrators.

<u>Concluding Thoughts</u>

Scholarship on social inequalities will benefit from increased communication and solidarity among scholars studying different marginalized groups (Lareau, 2008). Many dedicated scholars have argued that studying women, minority, or class issues exclusively overlooks crucial ways in which these areas are entwined in systems of social inequality (Lacy & Harris, 2008; Lareau, 2008; Pattillo, 2008 Zweig, 2005). Alternatively, McCall (2008) and other scholars have argued that in some cases, studies of one marginalized group can lead to increased understandings of others (McCall, 2008).

Although these important arguments should continue, my suggestion on the matter pertains to the academic spirit in which these ongoing endeavors should transpire. Understandably, most scholars of inequalities may have important allegiances with their respective groups of study. Previous scholars as well as the present study have encountered a number of important common threads connecting the struggles of individuals across all marginalized groups. In the present study's case, participants have not been an academically popular group to study because of the prevailing assumption in academic culture: if you are a "white male," you hardly need "help" and your struggles have all been of the minor league variety. In response, as I have suggested in previous chapters, this may not be the case; the sociological use of the term "white male" might be among a number of terms in the literature in need of definitional refinement.

In the broadest sense, very few of us are from family trees that have not seen some pretty rough weather (Howard, 2002). It is in this spirit I respectfully suggest that researchers in all areas of inequalities better serve ourselves and our colleagues if we encourage open, mutually supportive scholarly dialogue.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me your experiences about becoming an associate professor.

- What was it like to come from a working-class background to academia? Can you give me an example?

- Talk about interactions with peers when you experienced anxieties from not knowing how to proceed. Can you give me an example?

- Describe changes in your interaction styles. What changes did you have to make in your professional interactions compared to your colleagues?

- What do you recall regarding your negotiation styles that involved impromptu questioning and elaboration, compared to those of colleagues?

- If you were to reminisce with other professors, what kinds of stories might you all discuss about your Assistantship days?

- In what ways have you experienced professional growth during your assistantship? Can you give me an example?

- Tell me about a context or aspect of professional interactions wherein you felt that your interactions were more a matter of performing the role of assistant professor than experiences with professional development. Can you give me an example?

- Tell me about when you felt uncomfortable.   Can you give me an example?

APPENDIX B: CONTACT LETTER:

Hello,
I am Galen Reddin, Portside member and Ph.D. student in the Schools, Culture and Society Program in the College of Education at the University of Iowa.

I have located your email address by one of the following three, snowballing methods:
You and I are both members of the American Working Class Academics (Portside) on-line list serve. If this is the case, you received this email from me via the Portside Moderator's permission and his subsequent forwarding to all members.

Or, I received your email / contact information from someone who is a Portside member (and who had initially received this email via the above method) and has identified you as a professional acquaintance and/or an academic colleague who, based on the following information, may be an interviewee candidate for my dissertation study.

Or, I received your email / contact information via word-of-mouth communications with members of my dissertation committee.

I will be conducting one-on-one interviews with approximately 12, first-generation, tenured white males for my dissertation on equality issues of social class. I'm looking for participants employed in either 4-year or research institutions, thus excluding individuals employed at 2-year institutions for purpose of focus. The study will be limited to the time segment spanning from your time of hire to your tenure attainment.

I will be employing in-depth interviewing, a qualitative research method. Our one-on-one interviews will be more like conversations than formal events. I will explore a few general topics to help uncover your views but otherwise I will respect how you frame and structure your responses.

With your permission, I will make audio recordings of interviews for later analysis. I guarantee privacy and anonymity, and you will have the opportunity to read and comment on all materials.

I anticipate interviews to begin around late December, 2010. The days and times of interviews will be arranged around your schedule. Due to practical considerations, most if not all interviews will be via telephone conversation.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating or, if you know of someone who might be interested. And please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

Email: galen-reddin@uiowa.edu

Again, I sincerely thank you for your time with this announcement and I eagerly anticipate learning from your great stories!

Sincerely,

Galen Reddin

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