ABSTRACT

LATHE, TERINA ROBERSON. Class-Based Frameworks and Assumptions in Community College Faculty Members' Perceptions of Working-Class Students. (Under the direction of Dr. Sue Barcinas, Dr. Carol Kasworm, Dr. Duane Akroyd, and Dr. Lance Fusarelli).

Working-class students face many challenges and obstacles in regards to cultural disconnect, identity, and relationships, as they seek to attain higher education. Much of the literature has focused upon the experiences of the working-class student, with the student as the unit of analysis. While such an approach provides an understanding of how working-class students experience higher education, other aspects of the experience should also be examined, and critiqued as influencing, creating, perpetuating, and maintaining a culture that does not acknowledge social class as a potential hegemonic variable. A majority of working-class students attain or begin to seek higher education through the community college. Within the community college, the individuals with the most direct contact and thus influence upon the experience of a working-class student is the faculty member. In order to reframe and consequently diminish the obstacles and challenges faced by working-class students, this qualitative study, utilizing narrative inquiry and deconstruction, sought to answer two specific questions, within the arena of community colleges: 1) How do community college faculty members perceive working-class students? and 2) how are class-based frameworks and assumptions present within these perceptions? Interviews were conducted with 10 full-time community college faculty members at a large urban community college. Using a poststructuralist framework, perceptions of working-class students were first

identified and organized into four major findings: social class is seen but not understood, working-class is defined by struggles, working-class students must learn college, and working-class students should transform via higher education. The extent to which these perceptions reflected class-based frameworks and assumptions was made visible, by being deconstructed against three broad theoretical frameworks: functionalism, conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist. Via this deconstruction, the following class-based assumptions were made visible in faculty members' perceptions of working-class students: the working-class is dysfunctional, college is a means by which to challenge/change social class, and a working-class culture is (un)acknowledged and (de)valued. Recommendations following this study focus on making the issue of social class a visible and acknowledged variable in the experience of higher education, particularly as it frames an "invisible" class-based culture by which the working-class is unacknowledged and devalued.

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Class-Based Frameworks and Assumptions in Community College Faculty Members' Perceptions of Working-Class Students

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Adult and Community College Education

Raleigh, North Carolina

2014

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DEDICATION

To my Mama and Daddy…the hardest working working-class people I ever knew. To my students…I am forever humbled by your strength and courage, and I am grateful to you for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of your amazing lives.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born in a small southern town, the fifth child of millworkers. Generations of family worked the fields and/or the mills, so the topic of work, and specifically, what it means to be working-class is a significant aspect in my teaching and research interests. I was one of the first in my family to graduate high school, attend college, and graduate college. I am the first to attain a doctoral degree. My hope is that my journey within and between the classed arena of education provides others strength and insight.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks first to Dr. Sue Barcinas, for her patience and support over many years. I also want to acknowledge the insight and growth provided by all my professors in the Adult and Community College graduate program. Additional thanks goes to my dissertation committee for their support and suggestions. And of course, I could not have done this without the love and support of my family.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature-based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a coding structure by which the findings were analyzed and reported.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the background and rationale that instigated my interest in this subject, as well as my justification for the study. I follow with an articulation of the problem statement, the statement of purpose, research questions, and research framework. Immersed within these areas, I have chosen to include discussions of my positionality as it relates to my chosen approach for the research. I conclude with a summation as to the rationale and significance of the study.

Background and Rationale for Study

Background

Social class matters (hooks, 2000) and it most particularly matters in the area of higher education, where one's class status can determine opportunity, experiences, and attainment (Sacks, 2007). As a social institution, education is influenced by and reflects the larger historical, social and cultural contexts in which it exists. An integral aspect of these contexts is the economic structure in which individuals and groups negotiate, formulate, and

at times, challenge classed systems of inequality. Historically, education has provided certain groups privileges and opportunities while excluding and exploiting other groups, as a means of perpetuating and maintaining an economic system that depends upon a segregated workforce (Hurst, 2012). Further, the role of teacher within this arena has influence on how social class is created and given meaning, and consequently influence upon, the experience of the student (Goto, 1999: VanGalen, 2000).

Given the classist nature by which society operates, the educational process can perpetuate existing patterns of inequality by ignoring the manner in which educational assumptions and practices emulate and encourage a particular classed understanding of the world (Lareau, 2011). Opportunities gained through and experiences within education reflect class differences and as such may encourage existing class inequality. In particular, the perceptions and experiences of individuals from marginalized class backgrounds speak to the classed journey of higher education. Class struggles, related to choice, identity, and group membership, become invisible, with the experiences of a privileged class taking precedence and given value over disadvantaged classed groups (hooks, 1989). Unless those involved in this process acknowledge the influence of social class upon the experience of the student, continued exploitation of marginalized classes will continue in higher education (VanGalen, 2000). This is most evident when considering the experiences of the working-class student negotiating the middle-class culture of higher education.

Unfortunately, social class tends to be unacknowledged by those for whom a difference of classed experiences never occurs. In a similar manner to race/ethnicity and gender, one does not see how the membership within these social constructed categories

influence one's life unless one's membership is viewed as different or inferior to the supposed dominant norm. Norms are an aspect of culture, and the culture of higher education embraces and reflects in particular, characteristics of the middle-class (Green, 2003; Reay, David & Ball, 2001). The culture of a student population and even a multicultural diverse student population is expected to submit and confirm to this singular and dominant middle-class culture (Shaw, Valdez, & Rhoads, 1999). This is particularly accurate for faculty, given that pedagogy and practice in the classroom may generally represent middle-class norms by which working-class students are judged (Green, 2003; hooks, 1994; VanGalen, 2000), and that the overall culture of the community college requires students to assimilate to the dominant culture in order to "succeed" (Shaw, Valdez, & Rhoads, 1999). Indeed, one study describes how community college faculty pointedly support a pedagogy of cultural bias by asserting that a function of education is to encourage students to adopt and confirm to dominant cultural values (Rhoads, 1999).

The dominant culture associated with a specific social class remains a powerful barrier to marginalized social classes, and perpetuates advantages for others, in part because it is "invisible" to those who do benefit. As long as the experience of social class is framed as an object to be studied versus a lens by which individuals both experience and interpret the world, the barriers will remain. "Often in academic inquiry, more validity or status is accorded to the 'disinterested' observer than to the active participant," (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003, p. 5).

Hence, the class biography of individuals and the classed context of higher education, as active agents in the construction and experience of social class, are granted immunity from

critique. “Education becomes a tool for dominant ideology to deflect a critical analysis and critique of the larger system” (Nesbit, 2005, p. 5). A critical review of the literature makes visible the extent to which higher education illustrates a domain whereby class is constructed and experienced, and specifically, how student and faculty perceptions and experiences of “working-class” in higher education relate to and illustrate class-based variation and opportunities.

Rationale

Social class matters. As previously noted, social class matters (hooks, 2000) and it is explicitly evident in the realm of higher education. An overview of the literature provides evidence that class struggles within higher education, particularly for working-class populations, are a valid topic for research. Studies in higher education have examined the degree to which practices and philosophies in education create, perpetuate, and challenge ideas and assumptions regarding a variety of socially constructed categories and identities, including social class (Apple, 1988; Clawson & Leiblum, 2008; hooks, 2000; Jenson, 2004; Law, 1995; Nesbit, 2005; Wright, 2000), race/ethnicity (Cole & Omari, 2003; Diangelo, 2006; Dyer, 1997; Fine, 1997; Frankenberg, 1997; Sacks, 2007), and gender (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule,1986; Gilligan, 1993; Harding, 1996; Hayes, 2001; Hayes, Flannery, Brooks, Tisdell, & Hugo, 2000; hooks, 1989, 2000). Additionally, studies have explored the extent to which a lower social class status results in identity and cultural conflict, as well as increased economic burden and stress, as a consequence of attaining higher education (Adair, 2003; Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Hurst, 2012).

It is understood that coming from a lower social class background generally results in fewer educational opportunities, as well as a diminished quality of education (Apple, 1988; Archer, 2003a; Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Foley, 2005; Tokarczyk, 2004; Waller, Bovill, & Pitt, 2011). Likewise, it is argued that systems of education are created via, or may result in, classist pedagogies, practices, and policies (Apple, 1988; Clawson & Leiblum, 2008; Freire, 1970/2000; Nesbit, 2005; Sacks, 2007). Finally, the phenomenon of class construction, negotiation, and transformation, via educational attainment has been explored within the experience of students and faculty (Archer, 2003b; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Mahony & Zmroczek, 1997; Marks, Tuner, & Osborne, 2003; Ostrove, 2003).

These studies indicate, illustrate, and argue for understanding that within higher education, individuals from a lower social class standing confront a variety of obstacles and challenges. Specifically, working-class individuals must negotiate a wide variety of "invisible" challenges as a result of middle-class biased pedagogies, practices, and policies (Green, 2003; hooks, 2000; VanGalen, 2000). Social class can be identified through various components such as income, wealth, power, educational attainment, social capital, and cultural capital. Education is a key aspect of or a determining factor in these components, in that gaining education and hence certain types of knowledge is viewed as “moving up” in social class. Education itself becomes an arena by which different class-based cultures are silently but intently negotiated and created.

In order to better understand the degree to which class is experienced within the realm of higher education, and specifically as it applies to the negotiation required by and the challenges faced by working-class students, faculty perceptions of working-class students should likewise be addressed. To this extent then, my purpose in addressing the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students is to make visible the relationship between education and social class. Not in the sense of how working-class students are different, but rather, how the norms, practices, culture, and perceptions embedded within higher education "makes" them different, and consequently, treats them differently.

To gain an initial sense of how this difference is understood, working-class for this study includes various components of class-based distinctions within but not exclusive to power, status, education, and culture. Working-class then can be understood as reflecting specific culture, and thus identity, built upon jobs that entail little authority, power, or stability. This lack of power correlates with an increased dependence and valuing upon the family as a means of survival, and also reflects specific socialization regarding language and norms that embrace conformity and a shared understanding. In regards to education, a working-class individual characteristically may come from or personally experience less educational attainment than a four-year college degree. A larger and more nuanced framing of "working-class" is discussed in Chapter 2.

The arena: community college. Increasing one's education is perceived as a means by which class mobility may be attained, but practices, policies, and assumptions within education can act as agents by which social class inequality is also created and perpetuated

(Fine & Burns, 2003). Specifically, choices pertaining to educational attainment vary by social class, with studies illustrating that disadvantaged class membership is related to fewer educational choices, as well as greater burdens when higher education is sought. For example, lower social class individuals are less likely to consider, apply for, attend, or complete a college or university program (Sacks, 2007), and are also less likely to attend selective colleges (Walpole, 2007). Roughly a third more high school graduates from the highest income quintile enroll in college than lower income students, and when lower income students do choose to attend college, they are more likely to attend community colleges or for-profit private colleges that entail considerably more student loan burdens (Baum & Ma, 2007).

Completion of higher education is also correlated with social class status, thus perpetuating larger societal inequality. Specifically, higher family income and higher family educational attainment are associated with higher completion rates for four-year college degree programs (Baum & Ma, 2007). As a result, working-class individual's earning potential over a lifetime is diminished compared to higher social class groups. In terms of access to higher education, previous educational opportunities, which are likewise stratified, are influential factors. Students from lower socioeconomic statuses typically have lower test scores for college and scholarship applications (Baum & Ma, 2007). These students are also disproportionately more likely to have attended high schools in which there is less preparation for college as a result of less rigorous coursework, absence of advanced or college preparatory tracks, and lack of counseling regarding higher education (Walpole, 2007). When honors programs or college-preparatory tracks are available, lower incomes

students are more likely to be directed to vocational programs (MacLeod, 1987; Perna, 2000).

Educational choices, constraints, and opportunities reflect negotiations made within larger economic forces. Median family income increased by 16% from 1970 to 1997, while the sticker prices of higher education had an increase of over 100% (Baum, 2001). Higher social class individuals have seen greater increases in income over this period at the same time that the lowest social class groups have seen diminished incomes (Baum, 2001). Hence, changes in the socioeconomic status of particular groups indicates increased variation in how one may perceive the value of higher education, the affordability of higher education, and the subsequent choice in the type of higher education. In particular, the sticker price of a private college or university, given increased tuition and decreased incomes for lower and middle class groups, is perceived to be widely out of the realm of affordability.

As a result, inequality is perpetuated by fewer working-class individuals gaining the social and cultural capital aligned with higher education (Sacks, 2007), but additionally, the culture of higher education remains unchallenged via a homogeneous student population. Beliefs in a meritocratic and egalitarian view of college admission and success allow higher education to deny practices and policies that fundamentally disadvantage lower social class individuals (Sacks, 2007), such as higher admissions standards that do not take into account classed inequalities of previous educational experiences and increased merit scholarships at the expense of need-based scholarships. Such practices reflect the competitive nature of higher education, in that institutional ranking and prestige have become associated with the ability to recruit and serve a privileged student population (Sacks, 2007), consequently

forsaking and denying accountability to working-class student populations. As a result, the actual culture of higher education represents class-segregated access and choice.

As it pertains to this study, lower income correlates to fewer educational opportunities and a disproportionate and subsequent choice, regardless of ability, to attend community colleges versus four-year colleges (McPherson & Schapiro, 1999). The existence of the community college is in part due to concerns about the influx of working-class populations into the realm of higher education, and feared challenges to the status quo as a result (Brint & Karabel, 1989). By acknowledging educational aspirations of a working-class populace, and deflecting that group into a segregated, unequal educational institution (Hurst, 2012), the community college became the means by which a privileged class retained access over the cultural and social capital within education. Higher education thus means, for many working-class students, experiences within the community college.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Larger cultural norms and values indicate an assumption that social class boundaries are fluid, allowing individuals, with sufficient skill, effort, and motivation, to move from a lower social class standing to a higher and more valued classed position (Mantsios, 1995). These norms and values reflect an ideology that asserts support for upward mobility via change at the individual level, such as perseverance and hard work (Hochschild, 1995). Such individual change is supposedly available via higher education. Yet, said individual change is also a classed phenomenon, as it occurs within a classed context and culture. Working-class individuals' experience with higher education varies as a result of a working-class background, identity, and culture, and is constantly being negotiated and challenged via an

educational system that reflects, practices, and creates a stratified and more "valued" classed experience.

Assumptions become visible when a contrast of understanding is available. The issue of social class in higher education has been framed against the challenges of a low-income individuals entering into and experiencing the culture of academia. Working-class students are well aware of their classed "difference" while attaining higher education (Aries, 2008; Grigsby, 2009), and faculty who identify as having a working-class identity or background report challenges in negotiating conflicting understandings of the world and self as a result of different classed contexts and cultures. With a historical focus on the working-class student as the object of study, the normative, and thus empowered status of higher education remains invisible and immune to critique, and consequently, change. The "problem" has been defined in the characteristics, culture, and financial ability of the working-class student. The "problem" has been defined and studied via organizational practices and policies. The "problem" has not been framed in the context of faculty perceptions, specifically those who are more likely to encounter working-class students, community college faculty. This study seeks to provide a different understanding of the "problem" by investigating and deconstructing community college faculty perceptions of working-class students.

The degree to which education acts as an agent for social and individual change reflects Freire's (1970/2000) concern that faculty must acknowledge their role in constructing assumptions about the learner, the role of education, and the practices of education. The invisibility of social class, as an aspect of identity and a basis for culture (Bettie, 2003; Linkon, 1999), has to be addressed. Tierney and Hagedorn (2002) argue that

the perception of low-income students as not having culture reflects faculty's failure to acknowledge or grant value to the culture of said students. Tokarczyk (2004) proposes a specific need for faculty to consider classism within their pedagogy, and Nesbit (2005) calls for higher education faculty to acknowledge their understandings of social class. hooks (1994) and VanGalen (2000) argue that there can be no real transformation or change via education, unless teachers themselves consider their relationship to and maintenance of a system that consistently and inevitably creates stratified experiences.

Given a critical review of the literature as it relates to the experiences and opportunities of the working-class in higher education, specifically within the realm of community colleges, I argue that a study was needed to explore the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students. In making visible the assumptions and values of social class, as articulated by said faculty, the experience of the working-class student is reframed against the *perceptions* of social class. The problem then is not the social class location of the student, but rather how a particular class location, in this case that of being working-class, is unacknowledged and devalued against the middle-classed cultural bias inherent within higher education.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism

provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature-based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a pre-coding structure by which the findings are analyzed and reported.

Following a poststructuralist framework, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

How do community college faculty members perceive working-class students?

How are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perception of working-class students?

Research Framework

Qualitative Research

This study acknowledged and incorporated the strengths and characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative research allows for the understanding that meaning is socially constructed via a social context and social interaction (Merriam, 2009). Unlike quantitative research, which argues for an objective reality that can be captured, a qualitative approach does not assert a single, authoritative understanding (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative research's acknowledgement of multiple understandings and an appreciation of reality as socially constructed and negotiated (Baptiste, 2001) align with my ethical, epistemological, and theoretical beliefs. In contrast, quantitative research may focus upon cause and effect relationships, with the objective of providing proof of a finding that may be replicated and made generalizable (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Given the nature of my study, the basis for my research better complemented qualitative research assumptions and appreciation for exploring what is not, or cannot, be fully known.

My choice of a qualitative study as the means to explore the topic of social class corresponds to a belief that research and consequently research findings cannot exist apart from individual, cultural, or social dimensions, but are instead reflective of and subsequently richer in understanding because of these factors (Baptiste, 2001). In this study, I did not seek to affirm previous understanding or knowledge, but instead sought to create new insights and questions via critique of current understanding, as captured and created in faculty interviews. Qualitative methodology recognizes and affirms the perspective that understanding and meaning are constructed within the research process, as well as between the researcher and participant (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Specific to this study then, a qualitative approach allowed consideration that faculty perceptions of working-class students, as shared in interviews, do not necessarily illustrate any "one" truth. Furthermore, a poststructuralist theoretical approach justified my inquiry into and critique of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students as they align with and helps us understand the experiences of working-class students.

Narrative Inquiry

This study incorporated aspects of narrative inquiry as the methodology, by which data was recognized, valued, and later, deconstructed. Narrative inquiry is a sociolinguistic approach for analyzing text that comprises a story (Riessman, 1993), with an understanding that these stories are the means by which self and experiences are given meaning (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1991). Narrative inquiry allows that rhetoric, in the form of stories, life histories, graffiti, testimonies, etc., illustrates one's knowing of the world and may describe

how one constructs an understanding of the world via personal experience and negotiation (Patton, 2002). Specific to this study, I sought to explore the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is grounded in poststructuralism, which provides an epistemological and ontological basis, and additionally, a direction for the critique and analysis of the findings. Poststructuralism emerged as a critique of structuralism, which was an attempt to define language and culture, and therefore meaning, through a scientific study of what were understood as universal structures in the human mind (Chomsky, 1975; Levi-Strauss, 1963/2008) Structuralism argues that meaning evolves from assumptions that inherent truths, and thus understanding, correspond to specific and imbedded workings of the human mind (Ingram, 1990). Poststructuralists argued that the formation of models in which behavior and meaning are thus categorized is flawed, in part because such models assume a preexisting and determining condition of meaning (Eagleton, 2008).

Poststructuralism rejects structuralism's assumption that an objective reality exists, and further argues for a critique that considers the subjective construction of meaning (Hugdahl, 1999). This critique occurs through deconstruction, which may be defined as a method for unraveling discourses and identifying the many threads contained within negotiation (Macey, 2000). Knowledge is categorized and segregated into different levels of meaning, some of which are valued while others are devalued (Code, 1991). In regards to this

study, faculty perceptions of working-class studies will be deconstructed to illustrate the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions.

Positionality

In order to articulate my justification for this study, I feel obligated to introduce my various "selves" as they correspond with, contradict, and reflect my practices and beliefs. To this extent, I acknowledge that my personal experiences are indicative of larger social issues (Mills, 1959/2000), and present them as valued aspects of this study. Wilson (2001) and Baptiste (2001) argue that adult educators should seek to reflect upon the ethical and political consequences of our practices, and I sought to meet this challenge through ongoing discussions of my role, perceptions, and practices as they evolved from and influenced this study.

Given my sociological background, I am acutely aware of the degree to which social and cultural contexts influence behavior, experiences, and understandings. This is equally true for my own positionality. Hence, I am aware of myself as having a working-class background, but living a middle-class lifestyle. I am aware of my privileged status of "whiteness", and I am equally aware of how my female gender is at times devalued and unacknowledged. Finally, I am aware of my role as a community college instructor for a student population that is largely marginalized, oppressed, and seeking through education, a better way of life. Education has always been a pivotal location in which my classed identity has interacted with, been influenced by, and at times, challenged notions of value and worth. Via education, my statuses and sense of self have changed and continue to change, and I acknowledge my role now as a teacher in this process for others. My interest in this area then

results from my own experiences as an individual whose social class was challenged and changed via educational attainment, and now as a potential agent of change in regards to social class for other individuals.

My experiences are not unique. In a review of the research on and by working-class students and those in academia, I have come to connect my stories to others', and thus see that my experiences and questions reflect larger issues related to classed assumptions within education. In short, much of what I had felt as a former working-class student and continue to experience as a faculty member found voice in the studies of Zandy (1996), Adair and Dahlberg (2003), Tokarczyk and Fay (1993), and Law (1995). These studies illustrate the struggles that working-class individuals face within higher education. Reading them grounded my understandings and experiences within something larger, and as Mills (1959/2000) hoped, spurred me to consider action to change what I saw as the devaluing of individuals based upon classed perceptions. Initially, I considered research that continued to focus on the experience of working-class individuals, but chose instead to consider the invisible partner in this relationship, the faculty.

I am currently employed as a sociology instructor at an urban community college. I have also taught as an adjunct faculty member at various four-year colleges and universities. As a full-time faculty member at a community college, I have sought and been engaged with various faculty professional development programs, and I have led such programs as they relate to critical thinking, pedagogical assumptions, and academic standards of practice. These activities illustrate my interest in and engagement with faculty perceptions of and experiences with teaching, learning, and the role of education.

In discussions with both faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education, I have always been struck by the limited critique of or acknowledgement of assumptions within the everyday practices of higher education. Quite often, the questions I raise in these discussions regarding such assumptions evoke defensive, hostile, or simply confused responses. Thus my particular position as an "outsider" in these discussions increases my awareness of how perceptions regarding social class are unacknowledged. My personal negotiation of what it means to be educated, knowledgeable, and valued as an individual was and is done in a classed context. Although others may not recognize that each context, including the classroom, reflects classed understanding, values, and experiences, this does not, I argue, make my experience any less truthful or relevant. Rather, it highlights my perceived need to bring forward those assumptions within faculty perceptions as they particularly influence the experience of higher education for working-class individuals. To this extent, my assumptions indicate alignment with and argue for the role and practice of advocacy (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). In exploring faculty perceptions of working-class students, I am following in the footsteps of other scholars who are intent on change and reform, such as Freire (1970/2000), by seeking to make visible that while invisible, is granted immunity from critique and change, which I argue is the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions.

Summary

Social class matters (hooks, 2000), as it relates to the culture, process, and purpose of higher education. The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based

frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experiences of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. The literature on the experience of working-class students tends to portray the issue or "problem" as a consequence of being economically or culturally deprived; in doing so, the culture of higher education as a middle- and upper class experience remains unexamined, and thus privileged. This study makes visible those class-based frameworks and assumptions.

In Chapter Two, I have framed a definition of "working-class" and extended this to the literature available regarding the experiences of the working-class in higher education. I introduce community colleges as having a distinct value in the experience and construction of social class, and I continue a critical review of the literature, as it pertains to the conceptual framework of social class, engaged with and reflective of ideas of education. Social class can be approached in many different ways, depending upon disciplinary and theoretical focus, assumptions, and line of inquiry. Utilizing three broad areas of theoretical frameworks, the concept of social class was organized and analyzed in a manner by which to be defined and understood; in part to provide a conceptual basis by which to ground my research questions, but additionally as a means by which faculty perceptions of working-class students could be deconstructed to illustrate class-based frameworks and assumptions.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a tentative partial pre-coding structure by which the findings are analyzed and reported.

I ground my analysis within and against a critical review of the available literature on the topic of defining and distinguishing the concept of "working-class" as it reflects occupation, power, culture, identity, and family. The connection between working-class and education is then discussed, as it relates to early educational experiences and later in higher education. From these articulated experiences, I provide a summation of key challenges and barriers that emerge via the contrast of a working-class culture and identity to the middle-class culture of higher education, specifically as it relates to critical thinking, language and communication, identity and group membership, and motivation. These areas of the literature review provide the backdrop from which to interpret community college faculty perceptions of working-class students.

The second research questions asked how such perceptions reflection class-based assumptions. Therefore, the next section of the literature review discusses the concept of

social class, explicitly as it may be defined and valued, and for what it means for higher education, as reflecting access, choice, and experiences for working-class individuals. This material is organized according to the theoretical conceptual frameworks by which social class may be examined and understood, and later, how they will provide a coding mechanism for the deconstruction of faculty assumptions and understandings regarding working-class students. Finally, because this study specifically focuses upon community college faculty members, I include a section that describes and justifies the community college as an appropriate setting, and community college faculty as participants for this study.

Defining Working-Class

Because the subject of this study pertains to faculty perceptions of working-class students, this section is included to provide a framework for defining "working-class" in regards to the characteristics, traits, and experiences of this particular classed position. The concept of social class varies according to the factors considered, and may include occupational prestige, education, income, wealth, power, and lifestyle. The following subsections organize the available literature in a manner that respects this variation, while also providing a generalized framework of "working-class" as it is specifically distinct in regards to occupation, power, culture, identity, and family.

Jobs, Not Careers (Linkon, 1999)

Income is often the first variable by which individuals perceive social class differentiation. For the working-class, this variable alone does not fully address or articulate this particular class location and subsequent life experience, because incomes does not fully explain how one then lives (Hurst, 2012). More importantly, a major theme in the literature

identifies the occupation of the working-class, in contrast to other social classes as a means of establishing or framing working-class. Linkon (1999) specifically states that the working-class, as a group, have a distinct style and purpose within their occupation; working-class individuals have jobs, not careers, which are then characterized by little power, authority, or mobility. Roughly two thirds of the population falls within the category of working-class, with incomes above minimum wage, but below the national average ($25,000 to $45,000 a year), little wealth accumulation, and occupations that include service, manual, and labor (Zweig, 2000). Wright (2005) and VanGalen (2000) argue that it the limited power within these occupations, and not the income associated with them, that best defines and distinguishes the working-class.

Power

For the working-class, a lack of power includes a lack of authority over others and influence over the manner by which work is done (Livingston & Stowe, 2001). These jobs tend to be non-salaried, supervised by others, and require manual or physical labor (Zweig, 2000). In contrast, middle class can be defined as the attainment of college education, and an occupation characterized by some autonomy and power, while a lower social class is generally characterized by a high school education or limited college education, and limited or absent labor force participation (Lareau, 1996).

Hurst (2012) and Linkon (1999) expand this understanding to emphasis that the characteristics of these occupations, specifically the lack of power and autonomy, mean a distinct and specific type of life experience. It is a shared life experience, in contrast to that provided via a middle-class occupation, which constitutes shared and particular social

interactions and patterns of behavior characteristic of a working-class culture and identity. From the workplace, one's level of power extends into the everyday (Zweig, 2000), and forms the boundaries by which identification, choices, and expectations are negotiated. The relationships that working-class individuals have among themselves, and in contrast to others, are created with the perception of little power or privilege (Nesbit, 2005).

Culture

From shared experiences, comes a shared way of life, which is a premise of culture. Hence we can and should then consider "working-class" as a culture, with shared values, norms, language, and understandings. The norms and practices associated with specific social class location are termed 'habitus' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/2000) which signifies that class is learned, taught, and practiced in the everyday life of an individual. The following identifies keys attributes of a working-class culture:

- an appreciation of conformity and rules (Lareau, 2011; Lubrano, 2004; Kohn, 1969),
- hesitation to challenge authority (Lubrano, 2004),
- an emphasis upon the family and kinships as a means of survival (Williams, 2012),
- an admiration of meritocratic practices (Lamont, 1992; Williams, 2012),
- pride in self-reliance (Aries & Maynard, 2005; Skeggs, 1997/2002),
- a distrust of education not directly linked to productive work (Williams, 2012; Willis, 1977),
- valuing information gained from close acquaintances versus formal or authoritative sources (Ball & Vincent, 1998; Williams, 2012),
- delayed gratification (Arglye, 1994; Willis, 1977),

- pessimistic about the future (Bourdieu, 2003; Marshall, Swift, & Roberts, 1997),
- less ambitious and overall lower aspirations (Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Maguire, 2005; Walpole, 2003; Willis, 1977).

These characteristics may be in part explained by the vulnerable location of the working-class within the larger economic dynamics, which makes social mobility a limited option, and consequently ensures continued subservience in low-wage employment (Rawls, 2001). Too, the middle-class and the working-class see work differently. The middle-class views ambition and commitment to work as valued traits (William, 2012). The working class views work as respectful, but only as a means to provide for the family; too much ambition or commitment to work is seen as a threat to family, and family is viewed as the first priority (Williams, 2012). The sense of powerlessness from working-class occupations may embed itself in other aspects of the working-class experience (Bourdieu, 2003) and result in an overall pessimistic view of life (Marshall, Swift, & Roberts, 1997). Working-class acutely feel the threat of poverty, in that a specific, unplanned event such as losing a job or an illness, can quickly present overwhelming financial challenges (Williams, 2012).

Identity

From culture, one's sense of self, or identity is negotiated. For the working-class, a sense of identity is constantly being negotiated against the experience of the workplace. For example, the everyday stress of a vulnerable and subservient occupation encourages a mentality that hard, dependable work must occur in order to prevent a crises, and given that this is a valued and shared understanding of life, work itself becomes a litmus test of morality (Williams, 2012). A strong work ethic is the foundation of the working class, and “real” work

is associated with strength, determination, perseverance, and discipline (Williams, 2012). Lamont (2000) argues that for the working class, a sense of moral superiority is associated with routines, conformity, and presenting an ordered and well-kept visage to the rest of the world.

Institutions that support these values, such as religion and the military, are embraced in part because they acknowledge and support the life experience of the working class (Williams, 2012). In contrast, the working class view those with higher levels of education with distrust, in part because previous interactions with professionals are interpreted as being insulting or dismissive (Williams, 2012). The professional class is also distrusted because of the rules of social interaction associated with those positions, which allow for and even value subtle duplicity and deceit (Williams, 2012). For the working-class, honesty and directness are valued over social networking which is not perceived as genuine or authentic (Lamont, 2000)

Family

The structure and process of family for the working-class provides support and buffers the realities of working-class occupations. Additionally, family as an agent of socialization teaches and constructs one's view of how the world works, and how one should expect to operate within this worldview. In regards to structure, working class individuals are more likely to live in households containing extended kin, and living within close distance to other family members in part because extended kin provides an extended support net (Gos, 1995). Working-class individuals are more likely to experience family life through the relationships of extended kin and framed within particular geographic boundaries (Gos,

1995) which results in communication patterns exhibiting shared assumptions about meaning (Bernstein (1971), and further reflects a connection between language and classed-based relationships.

This is significant in that debate and critique for working-class individuals may be perceived as unacceptable, because it isn't the statement that is being debated, but rather the relationship to the individual who first makes a statement (Gos, 1995). To the working-class, communication patterns and the appropriateness of questioning is tied to previous learned norms of respect for authority and conformity to rules. Conversely, middle-class children are encouraged and expected to be equals in conversation with adults, whereas working-class children, are taught to see dialogue as means of maintaining social relationships, with an emphasis upon assumed understanding and connections (Lareau, 2011).

In contrast to working-class individuals' lack of power and control, middle class individuals perceive a control over their future, and consequently are optimistic about their ability to shape a positive and rewarding future (Shilling, 2004; Skeggs, 2004). This perception of control extends into the socialization patterns of middle-class families. Middle class children are taught and encouraged to use more words (Farkas & Beron, 2004), to ask more questions and interrupt more often (Lareau, 2011), and expect that their interruptions will be acknowledged and granted value (Streib, 2011). Working class children work from the assumption that those present in a social setting are aware of what is meant by what is said or unsaid, whereas middle-class children use expansive speech patterns to establish specific understanding (Bernstein, 1971).

Such understanding relates back to the issue of power. Working class parents raise their children to survive the economic world in which they know, which means conformity and obedience (Lubrano, 2004). Risk is to be avoided because the working-class cannot financially afford to make a mistake (Williams, 2012). In contrast, middle-class parents socialize their children to use language as a means of communication and as means of attaining position, power, and resources (Lareau, 2011). Subsequently, middle-class children are more likely to use language and their ease with language to establish a position of power in social settings at the expense of working-class children (Streib, 2011). For example, higher social class children perceive arguing as an acceptable means of negotiating power structures outside of the home, (Streib, 2011). In contrast, working-class children are not encouraged to ask questions, to interrupt, or to provide individual insight (Lareau, 2011). Middle class children are taught early on to use language as a means of reasoning, to exhibit intelligence, and to create relationships with authority figures (Williams, 2012), while working-class parents use directives, which emphasize obedience to authority and conformity to rules (Lareau, 2011).

The experience of childhood between working-class and middle class families largely reflects the difference in power each family experiences in the workplace. The childhood of the middle-class is structured with planned activities, group and individual, that encourage participation with adults, not as authority figures, but as equals, while working class families are more likely to allow children unsupervised freedom, in play and in school, and are less likely to require their children to participate in formal, structured activities (Lareau, 2011). Behaviors and subsequent sanctions are different as well, with working class children more

likely to be punished for disobeying or questioning authority, while middle-class children are rewarded for creativity and questioning authority, (Kohn, 1969).

Summation

Working-class reflects culture, identity, and a specific relationship to the larger economic structure. To define "working-class" entails consideration of how these elements are negotiated and interpreted to result in a distinguishable life experience. The following provides a generalized understanding of what it means "to be" working-class, which was utilized subsequently to interpret faculty members' perceptions of working-class students:

- Working-class is defined by a job that entails physical, manual, and/or subservient labor.
- Working-class refers to a potentially unstable economic position.
- Working-class individuals typically have less power, in their employment and in other aspects of their lives given fewer material resources.
- Working-class values family, as a means of support, understanding, and meaning.
- The working-class language assumes a shared context, dissuades debate, and is utilized to support relationships.
- Working-class families socialize children to accept authority, trust and believe in meritocracy, and confirm as necessary in order to survive.
- Working-class individuals value self-efficiency, and do not seek out assistance.
- Honesty, perseverance, and direct communication patterns are valued.
- Impersonal relationships and relationships with bureaucracies and individuals representative of bureaucracies are perceived with distrust.

- Working-class individuals display a distrust of education not directly tied to productive work

Social Class and Education

Thus far, the focus in this literature review has been how to define working-class and how it is distinguishable from other social classes. In order to interpret and analyze how community college faculty perceive working-class students, it is important to consider that said perceptions may reflect the values and norms of education, not as an institution but as a culture. Academic discourse typically ignores the influence and reflection of social class as a mechanism by which educational practices are created, reproduced, and at times challenged (hooks, 1989; Stuber, 2011; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Subsequent silence in discussions, and assumptions in practices encourage a culture that denies or devalues alternative understandings or critiques of education. Consequently, practices and assumptions within education may actually act as an agent by which social class inequality is created and perpetuated (Fine & Burns, 2003). The following section frames an understanding of education and social class, specifically as it illustrates education's role in the construction and experience of being working-class. The first part looks at the literature regarding early educational experiences, and the second part frames this experience within higher education.

Early Education

The different socialization provided by different social classes means a different experience with other social institutions, including early education. In fact, the experience of working-class contrasts sharply with the middle-class experience of education, and this contrast can be explained first by the different socialization each receives, and then by how

said socialization aligns with or is counter to the prevailing culture of education. In short, education generally adopts, reflects, and encourages a middle-class culture and experience. Additionally, individual behavior is subsequently evaluated according to middle-class norms and values.

For example, the ease and ability to speak up, speak out, and interrupt, by middle-class individuals may be interpreted by teachers as being engaged with the material and smarter, when compared to the quiet, submissive and rule-conscious working-class student (Streib, 2011). When the norms and values of speech patterns mimic those of the teacher, the teacher is more likely to interpret and reward those behaviors, to the detriment of other classed speech patterns, and consequently, the student (Streib, 2011). Working-class individuals are less likely to draw attention to themselves, and are more likely to wait for attention to be granted to him/her (Streib, 2011). Teaches may expect that students will request help, but working-class students are not socialized to seek assistance, and are less likely to be able to explain their needs, in a manner that teachers can recognize (Streib, 2011).

In conflicts, middle-class children have an advantage over working-class children, because they are able to emulate middle-class norms of asking for assistance, and proposing a solution that favors their situation (Streib, 2011). Negotiation is not experienced or practiced in the home/family life of a working class child, increasing the probability that middle-class teachers, who encourage the use of language as a means of conflict resolution, may then side with the upper social class student (Streib, 2011). As a result, working-class students may perceive that they cannot use language as a means of acquiring power or status,

and because the school environment expects and rewards competency for middle-class language patterns, thus see that school itself is not an arena by which power and status can be attained (Streib, 2011)

Working-class children are more self-sufficient, whereas upper class children are more likely to ask for and expect assistance (Lareau, 2011; Streib, 2011). Upper class children are taught and encouraged to use language as the basis by which to argue, and that argument is expected to reflect a rational, evidence-based justification (Streib, 2011). Lack of practice and ease with the ability to negotiate with words aligns with the specific power(less) traits of the working-class occupation (Streib, 2011); that is, continued inability to contest a specific situation, whether it be the classroom or the workplace, reflects hierarchy of language skills, and more importantly, an ethnocentric approach to class-based variations of speech, norms, and values.

Higher Education

The adult and higher education literature provides arguments that working-class students experience a variety of conflicts, burdens, and challenges as they contemplate, seek, or attain educational advancement in formal institutions of higher education. Studies on and by working-class faculty articulate similar experiences, within their own educational attainment and subsequent position as member of higher education.

I don't belong: working-class students. A reoccurring theme in the literature is the perception by working-class individuals that higher education is not welcoming to or accepting of their particular classed background (Lubrano, 2004; Stuber, 2011; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). For example, Marks, Turner, and Osborne (2003) find that universities are

defined by working-class individuals as the rightful place for "the clever or rich" (p. 350), and conversely, not made for or benefitting them. What is most interesting in this study is the assumption or definition by working-class individuals that intelligence and higher social class status were one in the same; thus perceptions of what constitute valid or valued knowing represent classed attainment and experience. When attending institutions of higher education, the experience of doing so likewise indicates a classed negotiation of making it align with other aspects of daily life. Withdrawal from the process, as articulated by students' perceptions that they do not belong indicates the degree to which classed assumptions constrain the possible challenge to and benefit from educational attainment (Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Stuber, 2011).

Consequently, the feeling of not belonging indicates choices within higher educated as being influenced by classed positionality. Likewise, class positionality and identity are constructed within and influenced by this culture. Bulluck and Limbert (2003) propose that class identity at the individual level includes an acknowledgement of both subjective and objective indicators, such as values and level of income. Ostrove (2003) and Stuber (2011) find class identity greatly influenced the degree to which students felt that higher education either challenged or supported previously held notions of self-identity; specifically, students from lower social class backgrounds were more likely to report feeling like outsiders, while those from higher social class backgrounds were more likely to remember college as a normal, and an assumed aspect of their classed biography.

These challenges come as working-class students turn to higher education as a means of both increasing their employment prospects and their overall status in the community.

However, cultural differences regarding may provide barriers in terms of one being inclined to actively participate or even motivated to participate in education (Lubrano, 2004; Stuber, 2011; Wlodkowski, 1999), thus reflecting a potential cultural conflict for working-class students. Many studies have identified employment-related motives as a major predictor of adult participation in learning opportunities (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), thus articulating that motivation is a result of an individual negotiating within an economically based context.

An additional motivation for lower social class individuals to seek higher education is a similar increase in status, via attainment of class-based norms of value and respectability. Skeggs (1997/2002) specifically addresses the concept of respectability, as a mechanism by which individuals are granted or denied worth and value (p. 3), as it relates to working-class students' motivation for attaining higher education. Her ethnographic study illustrates how working-class students frame the significance of education, not only for monetary gain, but also for social mobility. In her study, however, Skeggs demands that scholars as well reconsider how assumptions regarding normative structures guide their studies and understandings. To this extent then, Skeggs asks not only how the working-class women in her study perceive respectability, but she also encourages a critical reflection of legitimizing and thus, potentially hegemonic, assumptions and practices in higher education.

Trying to pass. Class-based conflict and concern over choices and identity extends to and is illustrated in the experience of faculty who identify as working-class. A review of the literature on and by working-class faculty indicates that the supposed emancipation and transformation via attainment of higher education was not necessarily the reality for individuals from lower social class backgrounds. In their collected essays on the experience

of female academicians who had personally experienced poverty and still identified as retaining some elements of a working-class culture in regards to their identity and relationships with others, Adair and Dahlberg (2003) state, "rather than being cleanly transformed by educational advancement and achievement, we were simultaneously erased and made painfully visible with poverty-class markers," (p. 5). To a large degree, such transformation was equated to a denial of one's former sense of self, and is exemplified in a quote by Law (1995), "my education has destroyed something even while it has been recreating me in its own image" (p. 2).

Additionally and in support of the previous discussion of education as perpetuating social inequality, women in academia who had achieved some social mobility, and thus negotiated their way into middle-class status via their educational attainment, remain stigmatized in that their classed experiences are unacknowledged or ignored (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003). Academia's understanding of social class tends to reflect a specific type of knowledge and understanding; that gained through study versus experience, and interpreted via a middle-class lens (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003). The denial of class as a mitigating factor in how one develops a sense of self and how one connects to the larger world means that one's working-class identity provides an additional arena for conflict and identity negotiation (Lubrano, 2004). "While one can appear to be a native in an adopted land, one is always haunted by voices from the other side of the border. These are narratives of profound conflict, of persons feeling out of place in both worlds," (Law, 1995, p. 7).

Not sure how to "act" middle-class, working-class individuals often feel it necessary to prove themselves via higher standards and heavier workloads. Adair and Dahlberg (2003)

write of working-class faculty negotiating conflicting social class statuses, worried about the classed choices of clothing, language, appearance, and attendance at conferences, as they sought acceptance in the world of academia (p. 3). Tokarczyk and Fay (1993) discuss working-class individuals in academia "being silenced by the singular middle-class voice of the institutions" (p. 7). Such silence relates as well to the desire and subsequent behavior necessary to "pass" in the world of academia, in the sense of belonging to the achieved status of a middle-class professorate. In her attempt to "pass," Sullivan (1998) speaks of being confronted by fellow faculty for her assumed entitled and privileged status, so well did she hide her working-class background.

Similarly, and as previously discussed, crossing over a social class boundary means potential challenges to previous relationships and identity. Daniels (1998) speaks of the difficulties associated with his personal transformation as a working-class youth to a college professor, as it relates to conflicting feelings of loyalty and understanding. In particular, he notes the process of interacting with his privileged students as a professor with both a working-class legacy and understanding of the world and a middle-class appreciation for the benefits and function of higher education. As discussed by hooks (2000), individuals with a working-class background who have achieved upper mobility via educational attainment are granted a constant class-consciousness.

This class-consciousness seems particularly relevant for faculty in higher education, given their role in creating, perpetuating, or challenging the experience of social class. *Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers* (Shepard, McMillan, & Tate, 1998) chronicles the reflections of faculty, who are conscious of being an individual with a

class biography, upon the influence of class on their own teaching approaches and practices. A common thread in these essays is the degree to which individuals from a working-class background are aware of social class in the classroom. Such awareness seems to indicate that class influences perceptions, which further influences, or reflects pedagogy.

The Culture of Education

As previously noted, studies indicate that access and choice regarding educational attainment illustrate class-based economic variation and opportunity. The experience of choosing or attaining higher education also reflects a classed journey, encompassing culture and cultural capital. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue, engagement with higher education requires an understanding of how and why education is profitable, desirable, and attainable. Cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu, is illustrated in higher education by the accumulation and practice of professional middle-class language, style, and values (Jensen, 2004). Crossing cultural boundaries is a metaphor for the experience of crossing class boundaries, via engagement with and attainment of higher education yet is only true for working-class students; middle-class students are not required or expected to make such changes.

Assumptions of valued understanding, identity, language, and interaction reflect a middle-class experience (Bourdieu, 1987), and attainment of such cultural capital is assumed to be in the best interest of the student. Assimilation into middle class culture reflects a devaluing of working-class culture. Accordingly, this inequality of culture works in the interests of and for the benefit of the upper class, as it both delineates class differences and justifies that such differences equate to unequal value and worth (Sweeney, 1997, p. 260).

Working-class individuals initially may not have the cultural capital by which to negotiate this journey, at least not as easily as middle-class individuals who see higher education as an entitlement, and who benefit from socialization that prepares them for this journey (Bourdieu, 1990; Stuber, 2011).

Archer and Hutchings (2000) present the argument that working-class individuals must negotiate the social and economic risks of pursuing higher education, as it differs from and challenges their current class position and relationships. Specifically, working class students must learn new rules about what is valued, what is not, how to speak, when to speak, and how to establish or change relationships (Jensen, 2004; Lubrano, 2004; Stuber, 2011). The challenges faced by lower social class individuals in their relationship to and engagement with higher education may be explained in part by their lack of cultural capital as it relates to an understanding of how higher education is negotiated and experienced, as well as being prepared for the experience (Sacks, 2007; Stuber, 2011), but this framework also exhibits potential for classist assumptions and practices. For example, and as related to studies on the cultural capital attained through higher education, a focus on learning as it achieves human capital subsequently encourages specific and limited access to higher education for working-class individuals, thus restricting working-class individuals from the creative process of knowledge production and engagement with the creation of cultural norms (Tett, 2005).

Focusing on the cultural capital of working-class students as explaining their difficulties and challenges in higher education is tantamount to victim-blaming, in that assumptions about what constitutes appropriate or "good" understanding and experience is

aligned with and grounded with equally class-based, although invisible, foundations. Class influences the manner of capital available and encouraged, and more importantly, how such capital is (de)valued depending upon one's social class. The degree to which the "norm" of higher education aligns with the culture of a specific social class is an important consideration as it relates to the experience of marginalized classed identities and groups, and additionally the extent to which the privileged culture is exempt from examination or critique. As noted previously, such discussions regarding the construction of class via the basic assumptions of education are lacking.

Consequently, studies illustrate that working-class individuals may perceive higher education as a challenge to their knowledge base and personal identity (Stuber, 2011). This disconnect between what they "know" with what they are expected to know illustrates possible assumptions regarding the 'veil of class' as an influential factor in the experience of higher education. Specifically it may indicate that cultural capital, as a component of and constructed within higher education, is likewise a class phenomenon, invisible to those who are privileged. Zandy (1996) writes, "I was taught in school not to value nor to see the dignity and worth of my own heritage. The message that I received as a young woman wanting to be an educated person was my working class identity had to be discarded—like a dark and heavy coat—at the university door."

Such perceptions also indicate that the manner by which cultural capital is both defined and valued in higher education represents a classist measurement of knowledge, understanding, and experience. Tokarczyk (2004) argues that working class students experience more difficulty with learning in higher education because their previous working-

class background with education and family has not fully prepared them for the culture of higher education. In particular, Lareau's study of variations in class-based parenting (2011) shows a distinction and subsequent important difference in how middle-class and working-class parents raise their children. Middle-class children are given more intense socialization in regards to language development, the ability to consider multiple viewpoints, and an ability to handle diverse social experiences. Working-class children are socialized to confirm to group consensus, obey authority, and be resistant to alternative social and cultural interactions. These attributes become significant if we consider that the norms of a college class expect and reward those students who feel comfortable asking questions, providing alternative understandings, and working in groups (Lubrano, 2004).

If we stop at this point, we may assume that a working-class background is defunct or detrimental to one's ability to succeed in higher education, thus exhibiting a preference for a middle or upper class experience, both as preparation for and engagement with higher education. However, an alternative way to view this finding is to consider the degree to which assumptions regarding the value or understanding of specific class background indicate a preference for one culture over another culture. In holding one social class background above another, a hierarchy is established that allows the "norm" of the middle/upper class experience to remain unavailable for critique.

The establishment of a "norm" in higher education based upon specific class/culture preference ultimately disadvantages other class/cultural understandings. Working-class students, immersed in classes and colleges full of middle-class students, and engaged with middle-class faculty who assume students share their classed understandings, come to feel

invisible (Hurst, 2012; Lubrano, 2004; Tokarczyk, 2004). In part, this sense of invisibility may emerge from particular faculty and educational assumptions regarding the role of the individual in the learning process**.** Working-class students often emerge from backgrounds in which individual achievement and desire is devalued and discouraged as a result of economic challenges that require families to develop interrelated and interdependent support systems (Jensen, 2004; Lamont, 1992). Sawchuk (2003) identifies a distinct working-class style of learning that emphasizes and takes advantage of a collective, mutually supportive network by which individual strengths and weaknesses are granted value. The culture of higher education, however, expects and rewards individual accomplishment and advancement over group relations and consequences (Jensen, 2004), thus illustrating a classist valuing of motivation, behavior, and choice.

Power is reflected in how individuals and group relate to one another (Zweig, 2004), thus in order to understand the experience of working class students, we must consider their relationship with others, specifically faculty, given faculty's greater share of power within the classroom. Working-class students, as a group sharing a similar classed and thus power relationship within and to society, may reflect similarly constructed and socialized values and beliefs, such as respect and submission to authority, skepticism that such authority is just, cynicism of social institutions, a devaluing of work that does not reflect or produce tangible materials, disrespect or disengagement with intellectual activities and abilities, faith in and support for personal connections and relationships (Greenwald & Grant, 1999, p.29). Consequently, individuals with a working-class identity may not feel empowered to

challenge said system of higher education, and may likewise choose to resist engagement with higher educational opportunities.

Educational Barriers and Challenges for the Working-Class

The call to understand class difference is especially important for education, given the position of educators in shaping present and future social class identity at the individual level, and structurally in larger social patterns regarding stratification. VanGalen (2000) argues that unless teachers attempt to understand this influence of social class, in the experience of education, pedagogy, policy, and practice, well-intended ideologies and subsequent choices may result in further challenges and barriers for the working-class student. The following identifies specific areas in which middle-class values and norms in higher education present challenges and barriers for the working-class student: critical thinking, language and communication, identity and group membership, and motivation.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is widely touted as valued and important, especially in regards to holistic education. As such, it is often embedded within courses, with the expectation that students will attain said skills, and benefit from said skills, in their future employment as well as in their general life. These assumptions are grounded in a middle-class experience with family, employment, and social groups. Working-class students, upon entering college, are less likely to have experience or skill in critical thinking because of previous educational and family experience. Gos (1995) argues that working-class students are more likely to consider memorization as a form of learning, versus creating new understanding, because they have been pushed to do so in their primary educational experiences. This can be linked to aspects

of the working-class job, in that such occupations rely upon authority figures having the power to create meaning, particularly as it relates to the rules, process, and production of work. This also corresponds to discussions of how working-class students perceive higher education as place for "smart" people; in other words, those with the confidence and skill in creating knowledge.

Yet higher education, and those from a middle-class or upper class background have been encouraged via family, peers, and careers to value and develop critical thinking skills. Critical thinking requires higher-level skills such as analysis, synthesis, and being able to consider alternative understandings. In contrast, memorization requires one to take the end product of these skills as fact, without further question or inquiry. Additionally, working class individuals who have a high sense of group membership with family, neighbors and friends are less likely to have practiced or perceive the importance of an individual voice (Gos, 1995). Critical thinking requires at some level that one reflect upon personal and individual knowledge, but to the working-class student, such a requirement contracts cultural norms of maintaining and supporting group boundaries. Just as one's occupation denotes ability to create meaning and knowledge, the expansion of class from the economic section into the family and education means that one's attainment or ease with critical thinking is also class-based (Cheung, Rudowicz, & Lang, 2001).

Language and Communication

Language and communication tend to become primary social class markers for the working-class, especially when viewed in contrast to what they encounter in higher education. This contrast shows not only difference, however, but also illustrates a hierarchy

and subsequent challenges. Middle and upper social class parents emphasize and reward their children for asking questions (Hart & Risely, 1995; Lareau, 2011) and utilizing language as a means of creating and sharing knowledge (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu, 1991). More specifically, academia reflects a middle-class appreciation for discourse that is argumentative, reflexive, and lacking of emotional investment (Green, 2003; hooks, 1994). For the working-class student, these values and norms contradict their own cultural understanding and experience with communication. Because these attributes are viewed as the norm within the culture of education, students who adhere to and exhibit these traits are rewarded by their teachers with attention and positive reinforcement (Bourdieu, 1991; Streib, 2011; VanGalen, 2000). Working-class students learn that their difference in regards to language, thought, and negotiation are devalued (Streib, 2011) leading to further isolation, embarrassment, and insecurity (MacKenzie, 1998).

Working-class students must often contend with translating the dominant language and communication patterns of the middle-class, at the same time that they seek to interpret and understand the academic material (Casey, 2005; Gos, 1995; Tett & Crowther, 1998). Working-class students' seeming inability to talk, ask questions, or engage in discourse may be viewed as resistance to learning or simply a lack of preparedness for college (Grassi, Armun, & Barker, 2006; Gos, 1995), which is accurate if/when the dominate culture of said college represents the values and norms of the middle-class.

Identity and Membership

Language, learning styles, and communication patterns reflect cultural identity, but they also represent membership. As such, they can be used to identify the extent to which

one does/does not belong within a group, and further, to exclude or ridicule that which is different. Working-class individuals, entering the middle-class world of education, are "outed" as working-class on one level, and as not "belonging" on another level. Working-class students' sense of difference and devaluing occur against the culture of higher education (Casey, 2005), resulting in the perception that they do not have the required skills and knowledge necessary to be a college student.

These feelings of "impostership" further challenge their experience in higher education (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999), and those who wish to "belong" may seek to dismantle or hide this aspect of self, and in effect, deny their culture and identity (Glaser, 2002; Zandy, 1995). For middle and upper-middle class students, college may be a place to grow and develop, but for working-class students, it can become a place where identity is devalued, challenged, and destroyed (Greenwald & Gant, 1999; Lubrano, 2004; Rodriguez, 1983). "Cultural suicide" occurs, in which members of the previous group (family, peers, and community of the working-class) seek to exclude the working-class student, who is perceived to have abandoned the group (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). To go to college, to attain a college degree are the essential steps of social mobility for the working class student. Yet, upward social mobility means a conflict between the former and current sense of self (Lawler, 2005; Ostrove, 2003; Skeggs, 1997/2002), and may further mean negotiating contradictions of cultural norms and values associated with lifestyle and perception (Stewart & Ostrove, 1993).

Interactions with other, especially across different classed groups, reflects the influence of class upon valued norms, and specifically creates opportunity for discrimination

against those of a working-class status when middle-class norms of interaction are presented as normative and desirable (Ridgeway & Fiske, 2012). Perceptions of self and relationships to others vary, with middle-class values emphasizing individualism, and working-class values emphasizing the interdependence of the individual to the group (DiMaggio, 2012). Working-class see their identify linked to the group (i.e., family), which requires conformity to the group (DiMaggio, 2012), and subsequently a self that is intricately dependent upon adhering to and reflecting the values and norms of the group. Situations that require or value individualism and creativity, as is often the case in college courses, subsequently provide cultural barriers to the working-class individual.

Motivation

These experiences coincide with additional challenges for the working-class student, who may have different motivations for seeking higher education, and a different understanding of how that education relates to other aspects of life. In short, education may simply be viewed as separate from the everyday life of the working-class (Marks, 2000) and sought as a means to an end, for example, attaining a better economic situation (Longwell-Grice, 2003). Too, what is required for that education may be perceived as counter to rather than complimenting a working-class lifestyle (Bamber & Tett, 1999). For the working-class student, the perception of education as valuable may be limited to the extent to which it is productive (Willis, 1977), meaning that the abstract, intellectual endeavors of formal education are not perceived as relevant. Conversely, working-class adults can be engaged and committed to education (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2000), especially when that education is perceived to be relevant to attaining employment (Connor, 2001).

Theoretical Perspectives of Social Class

The first part of this literature view provided an understanding of how to define working-class, what working-class means in terms of identity and culture, how education is experienced via a working-class identity/culture, and how the culture of education is embedded with middle-class, hence contradictory, values and norms. Elements of these different areas were then categorized in terms of potential challenges and barriers for the working-class student. In short, the previous information provides an understanding by which to consider faculty perceptions of working-class students. This next part of the literature review provides information regarding the theoretical underpinnings of how to understanding social class in a general sense, and then later, as it has particular implications for considering the theoretical assumptions within faculty perceptions of working-class students.

Class

Class refers to divisions in a society (Day, 2001). Such divisions may reflect distinctions in power, income, wealth, status, culture, connections, and education; all as they evolve from, create, sustain, or challenge relationships with and in society. The manner by which these areas are understood carry assumptions about their relationship to one another, and additionally may influence the way research on social class is conducted (Archer, 2003a). Discussions of social class emerge from acknowledgements that social inequality and differentiation exists within societies. These discussions and subsequent understandings of social class vary and are made distinctive as a result of using different theoretical frameworks. In short, one's understanding of social class is framed against and within a particular theoretical grounding. As the purpose of my dissertation study was to better

understand and make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students, the following articulates the process and initial examination of how social class may be understood, thereby providing a guide by which faculty perceptions are analyzed.

This study utilized three broad theoretical frameworks as a means to organize and understand social class: functionalist, conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist. Within and across these three frameworks, I identified and discussed specific theories and research findings, as they define and construct social class. I conclude with a discussion of how said frameworks reflect certain assumptions regarding the relationship between education and social class, and the need for acknowledging and critiquing these as they relate to faculty perceptions of working-class students.

A Functionalist Framework

Overview. A functionalist theory of stratification argues that social inequality ensures that the most qualified, capable, and worthy individuals in a society are rewarded for their investment and hard work via greater allocation of societal rewards, such as increased pay (Davis & Moore, 1945). A functionalist approach argues that society desires the most intelligent individual, with the most training and education, to fulfill the most important statuses within a society. To ensure that an individual would sacrifice the time and energy to attain necessary training and education, society must provide sufficient incentives, in the form of a higher salary. Consequently, inequality within a society reflects an assumption that the most important occupations for a society will be filled by the most worthy and capable individuals, which is encouraged and ensured by higher salaries and benefits.

Functional theories of social inequality and differentiation suggest then that stratification reflects a societal mandate regarding the needs of society, and ultimately supports the values of said society (Crompton, 2008), in the form of unequal incentives. Increased, and subsequently unequal, pay and benefits act as a motivating factor. Inequality represents the "natural" hierarchy of individual effort, intelligence, and worth; merit alone determines one's ascension in society, and social class positionality further represents one's merit. Social class then, within a functionalist perspective, represents individual accomplishment or lack of accomplishment. One's particular classed standing is the result of what an individual does or does not do in order to maximize individual opportunity. A major assumption of a functionalist perspective is that sufficiently equal opportunity exists within society to allow merit alone to determine one's social class standing. In assuming that sufficiently equal opportunity exists, then the subsequent inequality, as it relates to social class, is justified, explained, and excused (Crompton, 2008).

A functionalist framework thus sees class mobility and positionality as aligning with the needs of society, and as such, reflects a consensus regarding resource allocation. In regards to higher education, the attainment of higher education is both an opportunity and a resource. As an opportunity, the functionalist perspective perceives sufficiently equitable access and choice, and as a resource, education becomes a mechanism by which individual achievement is fulfilled. Consequently, individuals make choices regarding educational attainment that then allow them to find their niche in an existing economic system (Bradley, 1996). As an economic choice, and placed within a discussion of economics, Becker's human

capital model (1964/1993) is an example of how a rational, cost/benefit analysis of educational access and attainment aligns with a functionalist framework.

Application to education. Higher education is perceived as an option by which both individuals and societies engage in productive and rewarding growth. The degree to which such potential for growth occurs is partially a product of how said individuals and societies frame the costs and benefits associated with the attainment of education, as it corresponds to the overall needs of society. Becker's human capital model acknowledges and frames an economic understanding how individuals, and groups of individuals, rationally choose to purchase higher education (Becker, 1964/1993). Under this particular model, students and potential students are viewed as making a variety of choices, often based on a cost-benefit analysis, as it relates to higher education, including whether to go to college, what type of college or university, and whether to persist in their educational goals.

Human capital is defined as "the productive capacities—knowledge, understandings, talents, and skills—possessed by an individual; and investment in human capital refers to the expenditures on education, health, and other activities that augment these productive capacities" (Paulsen, 2001, p. 56). Consequently educational decisions are made according to the degree to which an investment within higher education results in increased human capital. Increased productivity corresponds to increased earnings, as well as increased societal production (Becker, 1964/1993). An assumption within this model identifies the individual who attains higher education as more able, both in the sense of being able to purchase education, and consequently to achieve greater human capital and thus worth to larger society (Becker, 1964/1993).

Similar to a human capital model is a "rational action" perspective regarding social mobility which argues for an understanding that individuals rationally act, in response to the specific opportunities and constraints of their economic position (Goldthorpe, 1998; Savage, 2000). Goldthorpe (1996) specifically argues that class differences in educational attainment are the result of unequal resources and opportunities. Class inequality is perpetuated via a class-based, economic system of inequitable opportunity, with individuals within specific class positions rationally choosing education as it relates to a collective good, such as the household.

Given a human capital model or a rational action theory perspective, education's role in class positionality is two-fold; one's current social class influences the perception of the costs/benefits associated with educational attainment, and consequently, the benefits of educational investments influences one's future class position. Policies and practices regarding the funding of education, as well as the perceived function of education to larger society reflects to an extent the manner by which access to and choice of educational attainment is constructed and experienced. Social class standing, via a functionalist framework, views class positionality, and consequently inequality, as functional for society, as it reflects individual merit and continued stability for larger society.

A human capital model further frames education as a means by which individuals make choices regarding educational attainment, and their future class standing. Education then is a private good, at times subsidized by public funds, which when purchased and utilized, results in both individual and societal benefit. Similarly, a rational action perspective assumes that individuals make rational choices regarding class-based opportunities and

constraints as it pertains to higher education (Savage, 2000). Both perspectives seem to indicate reliance upon economic structures and foundations by which higher education is experienced and attained, with individuals making choices within and as a consequence of larger social forces. Subsequently, it is assumed that social class is constructed from rational assessments of educational opportunities, and likewise is a variable in available opportunities.

A Conflict Framework

Overview. A conflict framework generally understands class as different groups' experiences with power and exploitation (Wright, 2000). Specifically, class may also be understood as a system of inequality, as it relates to material conditions, and different groups' access to these conditions thus influencing their position of having or not having power (Zweig, 2000). This conflict over power is illustrated in both a Marxist and Weberian approach to understanding social inequality and differentiation, particularly as it accounts for larger social forces and institutions. Such modernist or categorical approaches to defining social class typically depend on occupational status as a measure of class (Archer, 2003a), hence illustrating reliance upon larger social structures, in this cases an economic system, as a foundation for understanding social class. A conflict perspective thus views social class as a continual conflict between two or more groups, within the context of and influenced by specific economic systems.

Marx focused on social class as the consequence of power relations between those who own the means of production and those who do not, with subsequent patterns of exploitation, dominance, challenge, and resistance (Archer, 2003a; Day, 2001). Individuals

who owned the means of production and identified as the bourgeoisie, had power and control over the proletariat, who only owned their labor, which was sold to the bourgeoisie (Day, 2001). Marx argued that this 'social relations of production' described and further influenced all other relationships within a society (Day, 2001; Wright, 2005). Class, as defined by Marx, is grounded in an economic base, and as such, is an objective reality with repercussions for one's experience in society (Day, 2001; Wright, 2005).

A Marxist concept of class is grounded within a moral argument for greater equality via a "radically egalitarian distribution of the material conditions of life" (Wright, 2005, p. 6). This understanding highlights the degree to which structure, such as a capitalist economic system, determines and perpetuates inequality. To this extent, social class can be understood as one's location within and to an economic system, and allows for quantitative research to distinguish or capture an individual's place within a social structure (Wright, 2005). However, Marxism also allows for an understanding of one's relationship with others, and specifically to situate and understand individuals within classed-based patterns of interaction (Wright, 2005). Subsequently, class can be understood in terms of the choices and behaviors of individuals, as a result of specific class location within said structure.

Weber as well included aspects of a capitalist society, such as bureaucracies and rationalization, as measures for understanding the development of social class categories (Archer, 2003a). Weber extended Marx' definition of class as reflecting an economic structure to include status as reflecting one's ability to create and sustain particular life experiences (Day, 2001; Wright, 2005). While Marx' definition limited an understanding of experience to a specific economic position, Weber's definition allows aspects of status, as

associated with power and prestige, to be considered as influencing and reflecting life choices and experiences (Day, 2001). Additionally, a Weberian concept of class differs in that it more specifically identifies only one causal path regarding class analysis; specifically that one's relationship to economic structure, and subsequent access to resources concludes with different, classed opportunities (Wright, 2005). Marxism further elaborates on the consequences and negotiation within a market system to identify patterns of exploitation and domination as it relates to production relations (Wright, 2005).

Consequently class, via a conflict perspective, can start to be understood as a negotiated, although ultimately tied to economic relations, concept that allows individuals to ascertain or assert specific social standing separate from their place in a system of economic production. In contrast to a Marxist understanding of social class however, economic relations are not the essential foundation for the creation of class, hence within a Weberian understanding, the existence of social class is not assumed (Savage, 2000). Life styles distinguish particular groups' way of life, thus culture itself becomes a classed phenomenon (Wright, 2005). Status reflects one's position within or between Marx's two-class system, and consequently illustrates a negotiated sense of classed choices and options, as determined by dress, attitudes, and behavior (Day, 2001). Status and class differ in that such choices and options reflect social versus purely economic groupings (Day, 2001), although status implies and likewise reflects an evaluation of one's class standing.

Application to education. Social classes in the United States are bound by specific lines in some ways, such as income, level of educational attainment, and wealth, but are also blurred in the sense that an increase in one area does not necessarily equate to an increase in

another (Zweig, 2004). For example, one can have a doctoral degree, which is often associated with a higher social class, but still make less than $50,000 a year, which would identify them as middle-class. Too, level and breadth of power, another component by which social class is defined, may not align with increased or decreased pay. Status inconsistency implies that class identity and placement do not follow a strict hierarchy of attainment; rather, placement in different categories illustrates class as a conflicted, negotiated, and evolving process. In this way, class can be understood as a socially constructed category, in that how we choose to define categorical components of class is culturally and historically influenced as well as personally and individually experience.

Inconsistency in how we measure, define and identify for ourselves and others' social class placement does not defer, however, from the very real consequences of such placement. Marxist and Weberian approaches to understanding social class demand that we acknowledge the potential presence of social class, and seek to uncover the degree to which social life is influenced by it, however it is defined (Savage, 2000). A conflict framework additionally considers the degree to which class struggles represent arenas by which patterns of exploitation and domination are created, perpetuated, and challenged.

Various scholars have considered education's part in this conflict between and creation of classes, given an economic grounding. In some studies, education is seen as tool for continued exploitation (Apple, 1988; Archer, 2003b; Aronowitz, 2003; Freire, 1970/2000; Jenson, 2004; Nesbit, 2005; Sacks, 2007). For example, Althusser (1971, as cited by Archer, 2003a) posits education as a means of continued domination by a ruling class intent on the continuation of a capitalist society, while Bowles and Gintis (1976, as cited by Archer,

2003a) suggests education is structured and operates in such ways as to perpetuate class inequality, via segregated educational offerings and class-specific tracking. Other studies highlight the degree to which social class standing, as reflecting one's buying power, greatly influences the type and amount of education available (Aronowitz, 2003; Baum & Ma, 2007; Sacks, 2007; Walpole, 2007). Hence education becomes the scarce resource by which different groups, differentiated by social class, have varied access to and experience with potential power, and economic mobility.

However, as noted in the comparison between Marxist and Weberian models, social class is more than an income; it is also refers to what money provides in terms of status and choices. Lower social class individuals perceive having little privacy regarding or control over their lives, and this extends to their place in higher education (Sacks, 2007, p. 262). Knowledge is both constructed and practiced within higher education to reward those already benefitting from a specific economic and cultural context, at the expense of lower social class individuals (Apple, 1988). At a minimum, a conflict framework asks which groups benefit from greater access to and control over the educational process. Thus even individuals granted greater power and status within a specific educational setting, such as teachers, may work to create inequality, with the classroom serving as a reminder of what and how society defines and values education (Apple, 1988). Education becomes then an arena by which class is constructed, provided value, or in the case working-class individuals, devalued.

An Interactionist/Interpretivist Framework

Overview. Archer (2003a) argues that the relationship between social class and education can be understood given the degree to which social class is defined via a

quantitative or qualitative lens. A quantitative approach, which is often seen within functionalist and conflict frameworks, assumes an objective understanding of class, in which aspects or components of class such as occupation, determine one's specific classed location. Additionally, this classed location corresponds to or is influenced by larger social structures, thus illustrating a modernist approach to the study. The relationship between social class and education focuses on process, identity, and negotiation, as it relates to the more intimate and personal classed experience, and it is within this realm that social class can be understood as a process of interaction and interpretation.

A qualitative approach to understanding social class reflects postmodern and poststructuralist theories, in that class is explored at times as a process, a negotiation, as personal, and as a culture (Archer, 2003a). This approach varies greatly from a functionalist or conflict perspective in that identification of and experience within social class is provided meaning at the individual level. Consequently, social class may not be understood via fixed categorical attainment of education, occupation, income, or wealth; rather, it is understood as negotiated and constructed in ongoing interaction with others.

Social class may been seen as proceeding from material and cultural capital in which both determine status, class membership, and experience with class struggles (Bourdieu, 1987). In this case, the relationships, interactions, and the interpretations of each, as associated with economic conditions, encompass the concept of social class. Class membership refers to individuals who share conditions of social existence, and via this existence, perceive class as symbolic to and of their lived experience. To this extent social class requires an acknowledgement of habitus, defined as a socially constructed system of

dispositions by which one's perceptions and actions originate (Wright, 2005). Thus an interactionist/interpretivist understanding of class accepts and considers conflict over social and cultural components such as language, values, and norms, as well as economic or labor relations.

Application to education. Various studies articulate an ongoing, subjective experience and negotiation of class as it relates to educational attainment (Adair, 2003; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008; Mahony & Zmroczek, 1997; Marks, Tuner, & Osborne, 2003; Ostrove, 2003; Skeggs, 1997/2002). However, a key foundation within these studies is an appreciation of work by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000) as it relates to education, cultural capital, and social capital. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge and understanding one has that enables one to navigate through and succeed within a specific cultural context (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/2000). Social capital refers to the networks and relationships available to one that increase one's ability to acquire culture capital, and additionally, human capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/2000). Studies indicate that both are relatively correlated with social class standing, and to this degree then, an individual's attainment of and experience within higher education is a product of previously and currently defined class membership (Perna, 2001).

Cultural capital is illustrated in higher education by the accumulation and practice of professional middle-class language, style, and values (Jensen, 2004). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/2000) initially suggest that cultural capital became the means by which middle-class individuals could impart considerable advantage to their children by ensuring that the educational system aligned with and supported a specific classed-understanding and

environment. Similar to the arguments of conflict frameworks, assumptions of valued understanding, identity, language, and interaction reflect a middle-class experience, and attainment of such cultural capital is assumed to be in the best interest of the student. According to Bourdieu, inequality in education works in the interests of and for the benefit of the upper class, as it both delineates class differences, and justifies that such differences equate to unequal value and worth (Sweeney, 1997, p. 260).

Thematic Findings and Implications

Wright (2005, pp. 180-181) suggests a list of questions regarding class analysis that reflects various aspects of functionalist, conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist frameworks, including the degree to which class is acknowledged within and as structure, agency, and culture. Analysis may also address class struggles, transformation, and issues of emancipation (Mahoney & Zmroczek, 1997). The implied point is that we should seek to understand that class both reflects the structure of people's experience, and is constructed via one's negotiation and interpretation of said structures. These suggestions seem to incorporate both a qualitative and quantitative understanding of class, and as such, do not necessarily deny nor debunk any one particular framework by which social class is understood. Simply put, the study of social class may or should include multiple theoretical frameworks.

However, an acceptance that social class may be and should be understood, studied, and experienced via multiple frameworks ignores the potential for specific ontological and ethical assumptions to be additionally unacknowledged. Certain assumptions regarding the definition of class are inherent within particular theoretical perspectives, and may explicitly or implicitly direct the intention of a study that seeks to understand a relationship between

social class and higher education. For example, the degree to which inequality, and thus class formation, is perceived as "good" or "bad" varies greatly between a functionalist and conflict perspective. Inequality via a functionalist framework may be argued as motivational and serving the needs of larger society, while a conflict framework may consider the extent to which said inequality represents the interests of the powerful and not the overall good of society. An interactionist/interpretivist approach could additionally ask how the experience of such struggles represents symbolic, and thus evolving and contradictory views of reality. Without an acknowledgement that these theoretical frameworks for understanding class reflect explicit and distinguishable ethical assumptions for approach and action, the relationship of social class to and with education maintains a degree of invisibility, and perpetuates assumptions within practices and policies.

Assumptions regarding the relationship between social class and higher education are not inherently wrong or incorrect; rather, a lack of transparency in confronting supposed assumptions is the more pressing dilemma. To an extent, the fields of adult and higher education have historically included consideration of and engagement with the implications of their role in the creation of, perpetuation of, or challenge to social inequality as it relates to social class. The literature includes various scholars who have argued as to whether or not education can or should be neutral as it relates to issues of social class, and have conducted such arguments within or at least against moral frameworks.

For example, Freire (1970/2000) proposes that education cannot be neutral; it either supports the status quo or challenges systems of inequality and exploitation. Working from and reflecting a conflict framework focused on hegemony, emancipation, and critique,

Freire's argument demands that educators consider how individual assumptions and behavior within the field of education either reflects such a reality, and/or challenges this proposed dichotomy. To an extent, Freire's thesis assumes a certain moral authority. Specifically, that unless education has as its purpose the goal of emancipation, it operates as an agent of control and exploitation for a hegemonic system that denies individuals the opportunity to fully and completely become aware of, negotiate, and subsequently change their social reality.

Larger social structures and norms further seem to support education's role in social class construction and mobility, but again, such ideology may be accepted without critique. Cultural norms encourage a belief system that asks for individual versus structural change as it relates to social class; that is, rather than changing the social structures of society that create class inequality, we instead require that an individual, through individual action, change her specific position within the structure (Ortner, 1991). Cultural values indicate an assumption that social class boundaries are fluid, allowing individuals, with sufficient skill, effort, and motivation, to move from a lower social class standing to a higher, and more valued classed position (Mantsios, 1995). These norms and values reflect an ideology that asserts support for upward mobility via change at the individual level, such as perseverance and hard work (Hochschild, 1995). Higher education, as a social institution, is perceived to be the means by which an increased social class status is created.

Coye (1997) argues that a new and expanded function of higher education is one that incorporates and is committed to education as a means by which to improve social situations, and consequently the experiences and lives of individuals. Thus, education is seen as the

means by which class mobility, and consequently individual transformation may and should occur. In contrast, Aronowitz (2003) argues that one myth perpetuating social inequality is the ideology that American schools are "democratizing institutions that blur class difference" (p. 16), although in reality schools perpetuate inequality through a combination of classed-based opportunity and classed-based perception of educational attainment, with lower social class individuals ultimately achieving less overall educational attainment and less-valued or fewer credentials via limited opportunities. Issues of social class, class transformation, and class mobility are implicit within these studies and arguments, and to an extent, they represent some aspects of how different theoretical frameworks view inequality. Within these examples however, a theoretical and ethical stance has occurred, without explicit discussions of how such positions originated.

Summation

Wardekker (2001) states that silence regarding moral issues and/or indoctrination of traditional moral values presents a false dichotomy for education, and rather than ignoring the need for ethical inquiry, institutions of higher education should embrace the opportunity of a pluralistic society to stimulate new models of understanding. Similarly it should also be noted that silence itself can be a mechanism by which to rule and dominant others (Gaventa, 1980), hence, the inattention at times, and passive acceptance of assumed roles for education and social class within and by the fields of higher and adult education creates a potentially hegemonic arena by which class is constructed, experienced, and understood.

Consideration of how different theoretical perspectives frame inequality, and specifically social class, must include inquiry into the assumptions grounding these

definitions, particularly as they reflect ontological understanding. Kogan (2005) argues for recognizing that individual assumptions regarding knowledge are grounded in social and cultural contexts, and I extend this critique to theoretical frameworks. Acknowledging the basis of theoretical constructs is important because they are subsequently reflected in the literature on the experience of working-class individuals with higher education.

Community Colleges

The final part of this literature review provides an understanding of community colleges as a specific arena by which class is experienced, negotiated, and challenged, given their specific mission and goals, faculty characteristics, and student populations. Social class is only starting to be a topic of research and concern in higher education with the United States, and then typically is associated with or framed against the experience of lower social classed groups at elite colleges and universities. Given that working-class individuals experience all types of higher educational settings, but are more likely to at least initially experience higher education at the community college level, the choice of a community college as a specific location is appropriate for this study.

Mission and Goals

Cohen and Brawer (2003) define a community college as "any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree" (p. 5). This definition does not however fully reflect the multiple and sometimes conflicting demands or expanding expectations of community colleges. Education has long been perceived as beneficial for the individual and society, and community colleges in effect developed in response to emerging acknowledgement of an alternative to the university

(which primarily served a privileged portion of the population), and a means by which to provide skills-based training and knowledge to the masses (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Following the 1947 Commission on Higher Education, community colleges were charged with specific accountability to the local community, in regards to adult education, vocational training, general education, and transfer programs (Gleazer, 1994). An alternative, and later charge, specified community colleges as a stratified option of higher education for lower-income students, as a means of maintaining the prestige of four-year colleges and universities for the more privileged classes (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

Historically, community colleges have served the local communities especially in regards to economic and social needs, such as industry training and cultural immersion, but too, specific groups of individuals such as the unemployed, immigrants, the disabled, and the economically disadvantaged were and are benefactors, via open-door policies, remedial development, and continuing education (Ratcliff, 1994). Presently, a variety of functions are expected of community colleges, and these may often seem in conflict with one another, particularly as public funding is decreasing. These functions include academic transfer, vocational and technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and more recently emphasized, community service (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). At the center of these expectations, however, is a focus upon the learner, and meeting the needs of that learner, which may be different from one group to another, and additionally may be different for the same learner at different points in one's personal life and career trajectory (Gleazer, 1994).

A major criticism of community colleges is the extent to which these institutions perpetuate social inequality and maintain said inequality of the status quo by modifying student goals to align with lower educational attainment and thus decreased class mobility opportunity (Clark, 1960). A follow-up study by Pascarella, Edison, Amaury, Terenzina, and Hagedorn (1998) found that indeed, a significant percentage (between 21 and 30%) of community college students, versus four-year college students, were more likely to lower their educational aspirations upon entering college. Others argue that community colleges bridge the worlds and demands of secondary and higher education, allowing unprecedented access for the acquisition of skills and knowledge to groups of individuals who may have otherwise been denied opportunity for class mobility (Ratcliff, 1994).

The culture of the community college is also criticized as an environment in which dominant cultural values are given precedence over the varied cultural background of student populations (Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoads, 1999). Culture is not limited to race/ethnicity or country of origin, but may also include variations of class-based lifestyle, opportunities, and experiences. The degree to which community colleges establish norms, practices, and policies reflective of a particular classed understanding may establish a competition between the student and the school, with an assumption that the successful student "wins" by adapting to the dominant culture (Goto, 1999). Conversely, the extent to which community colleges adhere to the dominant culture (Shaw, Valdez, & Rhoads, 1999), characterized by middle-class values and norms, can create barriers to success for marginalized groups simply because those groups share a different culture.

This cultural conflict reflects the varied and distinct expectations of students, faculty, and administrators, who must negotiate between ideals of social mobility, social change, workforce development, allegiance to local and regional economic systems, and personal development, as a goal of community colleges. (Dougherty, 1994; Kemper, 1990). Additional research by Levine (2006) also indicates that with changing economic and political mechanisms, community colleges are aligning more with the needs of the government and business sector in contrast to the needs of individual students, and that faculty perceive this change in culture as a potential conflict between educating the student, and training the student for a specified career path. This becomes more significant because changes in public policy have decreased the opportunity for economically disadvantaged individuals to attend four-year colleges, in favor of promoting community colleges as an efficient way to provide specific and limited training for expedited transition to the workforce (Shaw, Goldrick-Rab, Mazzeo, & Jacobs, 2009).

Community College Students

The diversity of the community college itself presents challenges, as community colleges serve a hugely diverse student population (Opp, 2002) and are more likely than four-year colleges to serve older students who have both work and family responsibilities, as well as students under-prepared for college-level work, because of economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). In 2006-07, 6.2 million or 35% of all postsecondary students were enrolled in community colleges (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Community colleges vary from four-year colleges and universities in that their student population represents a greater percentage of nontraditional, low-income, and minority

students (Provasnik & Planty, 2008), in part because of open admissions policies. A higher proportion of community college students are older, female, non-White, and from a lower socioeconomic status (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Community colleges typically provide educational opportunity for less cost than 4-year colleges and universities, and are thus seen as a more accessible to lower- income individuals (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). Open admissions policies likewise provide accessibility for disadvantaged populations, and soaring costs of four-year colleges and universities are making community college education more appealing to working and middle-class families (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Gleazer, 1994).

Community College Faculty

Faculty at community colleges differ from those at four-year universities in that they are more likely to have teaching as their primary activity, less likely to have a terminal degree in their field, and they are more likely to be employed part-time (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Additionally, community college faculty identifies the community college focus upon teaching versus research as a significant reason for their chosen career (Fugate & Amey, 2000). Although roughly two-thirds of community college faculty members are employed part-time, the majority of community college courses are taught by full-time faculty members (Twombly & Townsend, 2008).

Community college faculty's definition of and focus upon teaching reflects an acknowledgement of personal and professional growth as a goal of education, rather than simply increasing a student's workplace skills and credentials (Fugate & Amey, 2000). Faculty describes their role as including that of "mentor, role model, coach, advocate, student

facilitator, and guide" (Fugate & Amey, 2000, p. 4), and 95% report satisfaction with their relationships with students (Huber, 1998). Furthermore, community college faculty appears to spend more time with students than faculty at four-year colleges and universities (Kozeracki, 2002). Although a significant proportion of faculty report being not satisfied with the academic preparedness of their students, a larger proportion (87%) report a belief in accessible higher education, thus illustrating a high degree of commitment to the role of community colleges in meeting the needs of disadvantaged student populations (Hurst, 2012).

Kozeracki (2002) posits that perhaps the potential social or emotional growth in student development may explain community college faculty satisfaction with teaching and their students, in contrast to the dissatisfaction of their students' academic preparedness and performance. Student development, outside of academics, is a priority for faculty, and they report a belief that their institutions should have a larger impact upon personal growth and development, compared to their contemporaries at four-year colleges and universities (Kozeracki, 2002). This emphasis does not deter from another expectation of community colleges, which is career preparedness, as significant proportion of community college faculty express competency and excellence in this role (Huber, 1998).

The juncture of two motivations, student development and career preparedness form a significant basis by which students are perceived. While exhibiting an awareness of their role and influence in meeting the needs of disadvantaged students, faculty seem to interpret this as a justification for advancing a pedagogy intent upon cultural assimilation to the dominant culture (Rhoads, 1999), thus meeting the objective of guiding one's personal development, at

the time that such development aligns with a specified education plan framed within workforce development (Brint & Karabel, 1989). In short, working-class students, as a perceived group with inadequate identity and worth, are to be remade into an enlightened and productive member of society. This perception aligns with and perhaps explains previous documentation of how working-class students feel devalued and misplaced within higher education, and it hints at the extent to which the particular role of faculty contribute to said experience.

Summation

Community colleges have a specific history in regards to the experience and construction of social class issues, primarily as these relate to industry and workforce development, educational accessibility, and social mobility. Community college faculty strive to meet various and sometimes conflicting goals of their institutions, but in general seem to share as a primary objective an emphasis upon teaching. This teaching aligns with and corresponds to economic, professional, and personal growth and development. It is important to remember however, that critics of this process highlight an unintentional consequence of students decreasing their educational ambitions when they choose to attend community colleges. Given the literature on working-class students encountering economic and cultural disadvantages within higher education, it is appropriate that community college faculty, who are more likely to encounter and serve working-class students, and who seek to promote growth and development within a specific educational arena that purports increased class mobility, are the participants in a study that explores the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in perceptions of working-class students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a tentative partial pre-coding structure by which the findings are analyzed and reported.

This literature review articulates that community colleges, because of their history and missions, are valid locations for inquiry into social class, and specifically that community college faculty, because of their focus on student growth and development, are valid subjects by which to critique the relationship of education to and with social class. Social class, as a concept, is discussed in regards to theoretical distinctions and assumptions, and further, that such assumptions are often unacknowledged. Finally, the importance of this study is summarized in the literature regarding the experiences of working-class students and faculty, which highlight the challenges and barriers faced by those who seek class mobility at the same time that their own classed background is ignored or devalued.

As previously stated, social class matters (hooks, 2000), although it may be unacknowledged. Maintaining silence regarding the role of social class, not only for those who experience the disadvantage of a particular classed location but also for those who benefit from and perpetuate a classed culture within higher education, demeans the ability of

education to be a mechanism for social and individual transformation. I have attempted to connect the documented experiences of those who are disadvantaged by this silence, working-class individuals, to the role of higher education, and specifically community college faculty, in regards to this silence. The grounding of this inquiry against theoretical frameworks by which social class, and more specifically the relationship of social class to education, is understood illustrates another degree of silence, in that assumptions of these concepts and their relationship may be unacknowledged. This study seeks to connect all of these experiences and understandings as they help make more visible and explicit the veil of social class over higher education.

In Chapter Three, I articulate and justify the qualitative nature of this study, and describe the chosen theoretical framework and research methodology. I include discussions of my rationale for the research approach, a description of the research sample, an overview of the research design, methods of data collection, analysis and synthesis of the data, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and benefits and limitations of the study. I conclude with a summation of these points as they influenced and represented the purpose of the study.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature-based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a pre-coding structure by which the findings were analyzed and reported.

In this chapter, I articulate and justify the qualitative nature of this study, and describe the chosen theoretical framework and research methodology. I include discussions of my rationale for the research approach, a description of the research sample, an overview of the research design, methods of data collection, analysis and synthesis of the data, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations and strengths of the study. I conclude with a summation of these points as they influence and represent the purpose of the study.

Interviews with ten community college faculty members, and deconstruction of these interviews as a means of critique were utilized. Following a poststructuralist framework, the following research questions were addressed:

How do community college faculty perceive working-class students?

How are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perception of working-class students?

A review of the literature makes clear that working-class individuals feel the presence of their particular social class location within the realms of higher education, and this study sought to make visible the articulated and unarticulated assumptions surrounding class issues as reflected in faculty perceptions. These perceptions were recorded via interviews with faculty members, and deconstruction was utilized as a means for critiquing participant perceptions of working-class students. From this analysis, the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students was made visible.

Theoretical Framework

Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

This study acknowledged and incorporated the strengths and characteristics of a qualitative study. Qualitative research allows for the understanding that meaning is socially constructed via a social context and social interaction (Merriam, 2009). Unlike quantitative research, which argues for an objective reality that can be captured, a qualitative approach does not assert a single, authoritative understanding (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative research's acknowledgement of multiple understandings, and an appreciation of reality as socially constructed and negotiated (Baptiste, 2001) align with my articulated ethical, epistemological, and theoretical beliefs. In contrast, quantitative research focuses upon cause and effect relationships, with the objective of providing proof of a finding that may be replicated and made generalizable (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In short, quantitative

research may be used to support the notion that grand-narratives provide a singular and exclusive understanding of social experience. A quantitative approach would not allow me to assert alternative understandings of experience, in the manner that a qualitative approach provides. Additionally, as I did not seek to test a hypothesis or establish a singular understanding of an issue, the basis for my research better complements qualitative research assumptions and appreciation for exploring what is not, or cannot be fully known.

What we recognize as Truth, and how we come to do so, carries ethical assumptions. These assumptions may indicate larger cultural norms that perpetuate hegemonic practices. One can argue that within the choice of a research design, similar assumptions and practices may be inherent. My choice of a qualitative study as the means to explore the topic of social class corresponds to a belief that research and consequently research findings cannot be separate from individual, cultural, or social dimensions, but are instead reflective of and subsequently more rich in understanding because of these factors (Baptiste, 2001). In this study, I did not seek to affirm previous understanding or knowledge, but instead hoped to create new insight and questions via critique of current understanding, as captured and created in faculty interviews. Qualitative studies recognize and affirm that understanding and meaning are constructed within the research process, as well as between the researcher and participant (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A qualitative approach allows a consideration that faculty perceptions of working-class students, as shared in interviews, do not necessarily illustrate any "one" truth. Furthermore, a poststructuralist theoretical approach justifies my inquiry into and critique of how faculty perceptions aligned with and helps us understand the experiences of working-class students, as illustrated in the literature.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism refers to a group of theoretical perspectives which examine the relationships between individuals and the world, particularly as it reflects an understanding of how meaning is both practiced and reproduced (Belsey, 2002). This body of perspectives encompasses aspects of critical thought and postmodernism, particularly as it relates to the role of critique. It denies the assumption of objectivity as a universal truth (Peters & Burbules, 2004). It is political in that it "aims to expose structures of domination by diagnosing 'power/knowledge' relations and their manifestations in our classifications, examinations, practices, and institutions" that suppose such a universal truth (p. 5). At the source of poststructuralist's critique of how meaning is practiced and reproduced is the symbolic interplay and utilization of language, as both a means to represent certain shared understandings and a means to create understanding.

Poststructuralism emerged as a critique of structuralism, which was an attempt to define language and culture, and therefore meaning, through a scientific study of what were understood as universal structures in the human mind (Chomsky, 1975; Levi-Strauss, 1963) Structuralism assumes that meaning evolves from assumptions that inherent truths, and thus understanding, correspond to specific and imbedded workings of the human mind (Ingram, 1990). Poststructuralists argued that the formation of models in which behavior and meaning are thus categorized is flawed, in part because such models assume a preexisting and determining condition of meaning (Eagleton, 1993). Poststructuralism rejects structuralism's assumption that an objective reality exists, and further argues for a critique that considers the subjective construction of meaning (Hugdahl, 1999).

A postmodern basis. Inherent in poststructuralist's critique of truth and meaning is a postmodern understanding of reality and knowledge. Postmodernism contends that the world is essentially fragmented and that what passes for theoretical generalizations are really only context-specific insights produced by particular discourse communities (Powell, 1998). Postmodernism challenges metanarratives, which are defined here as grand theoretical frameworks that seek to organize and present the concepts of truth and reality, as they relate to the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge (Lyotard, 1979/1999). Because postmodernism rejects an existence of a true, objective reality, narratives about how large social structures and processes determine experiences are considered invalid measures for understanding meaning (Peters & Burbules, 2004). Ideas in metanarratives are not sources of meaning reflected in language; rather they are consequences attached to meanings created via discourse (Belsey, 2002).

In a postmodern framework, knowledge is understood as a component of culture, and thus varies from one cultural context to another (Edwards & Usher, 1997). Truth and reality are not fixed, but represent constantly shifting social, political, and economic conditions (Crotty, 1998). Postmodernism provides opportunity for multiple voices to be heard, and does not require that one Truth emerge from such dialogue. Rather, such ambiguity of "truth" demands multiple, and often conflicting, understandings to coexist in the learning experience. It is the ambiguity and complexity then, which provides the opportunity for understanding versus a single voice of authority.

Postmodernism and poststructuralism both argue that an essential and universal truth is unattainable (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). Truth is not an objective state but rather represents

power relations that emerge from and reflect specific discourses; negotiations that occur between different parties, and may be represented in text, speech, and performance (Foucault, 1980). Discourses are continuously experienced via the relationships of individuals, individuals to institutions, and across institutions (Foucault, 1973). A postmodern/poststructuralist framework understands reality not as a fixed, stable concept, but as reflective of and encompassing multiple truths (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). Consequently, as Foucault points out (Wilkin, 1999), it must be assumed that alternative understandings and frameworks for the study of society are available, and that such alternatives may have been marginalized and perhaps excluded from consideration.

Postmodernism provides space for the subjective nature of knowledge, and particularly acknowledges how and in what ways understanding is constructed. This epistemology recognizes the historical, cultural, and sociological context from which understand is negotiated and framed (Harding, 1991). Poststructuralism varies from postmodernism in its approach to dealing with the subjective nature of knowledge. Poststructuralists, beginning with Derrida, have developed deconstruction as a method for unraveling discourses and identifying the many threads contained within negotiation (Macey, 2000). Through deconstruction, poststructuralists pull apart discourses and examine the ways knowledge is categorized and segregated into different levels of meaning, some of which are valued while others are devalued (Code, 1991).

Society's narratives represent the truth as they understand it, but once deconstructed, narratives can be viewed as tools by which those with more power use control of discourse to maintain their position within a society (Foucault, 1973). Hence, power struggles are

represented within and reflect symbolic interaction and meaning, termed hegemony, whereby dominance in voice results in the subordination of others (Swingewood, 1993). Poststructuralist's acceptance that the subjective nature of knowledge, as a subsequent struggle over and within such discourses, reflects poststructuralist's alignment with critical theory.

Relationship to critical thought. Critical thought and postmodernism both acknowledge that knowledge is socially located, and hence socially constructed (Kilgore, 2001); critical thought through the positioning of knowledge as influenced by history and social forces, postmodernism through a deconstruction of knowledge as centered within discourse communities. The aim of critical theory is to examine social and political issues in such a way as to critique ideology (Held, 1980), and thus open opportunity to change practices that inherently dominate and exploit individuals. A critical approach challenges assumptions related to knowledge construction, raises questions about hegemony, power, and ideology, and actively seeks to contest those aspects (Brookfield, 2005).

The work of Freire offers an example of how poststructuralism and critical inquiry are similar. Freire (1973/2000) argues that nothing is neutral; until the oppressed can forge a sense of reality and self that is separate, but not in opposition to, the oppressor, she remains confined to the boundaries of oppression (p. 46). To overcome this struggle, Freire argues that one must seek through dialogue, reflection, and action, a new model of self, and a new understanding of what may be possible. Hence, hegemony is not necessarily an aspect "out there" to be critiqued, but it is also an aspect of one's self, created, maintained, and perpetuated in individual beliefs and practices. The process by which one develops a deeper

sense of self and the larger forces at work Freire (1973/2000) is referred to as "conscientization" (p. 73). Freire argues that a major problem of liberation for the oppressed is overcoming the oppressor within (p. 48). Socialized within a system of exploitation and domination, the oppressed not only learn this structure, but also form a self-concept based within such ideology. Hence, individuals must become aware of the oppression as a "limit-situation", and their own ability as humans to acknowledge, reflect upon, and change said "limit-situation" (p. 99).

In a similar manner, poststructuralism uses deconstruction as a method by which to unmask power relations, but differs from critical theory in that it does not attempt to reassert a new truth. Critical theory is considered a modern, as opposed to postmodern, school of thought (Macey, 2000). A critical approach may recognize multiple interpretations of meaning, but it also emerges from a modern appreciation for and acceptance of an ultimate and objective reality (Ingram, 1990). For example, in an ideology critique, the ultimate goal is the adjustment of social order and injustice (Held, 1980), thus illustrating an assumption of a moral or ethical hierarchy and ontology. By challenging issues of hegemony, power and ideology, a critical approach seeks to challenge one perception of reality, and to assert or put in place, a different, though equally constructed, perception of reality (Lather, 1992).

Poststructuralism, in contrast to positivistic critical theory, posits that there is not one assumed true, objective reality (Peters & Burbules, 2004), hence a metanarrative of how large social structures determine experiences is invalid. Ideas are not the source of the meaning reflected in language; rather poststructuralism asserts that ideas are the consequence attached to the meanings created via discourse (Belsey, 2002). Metanarratives then represent

communities of discourses that are equally vulnerable to producing and reflecting power relations, particularly as it reflects assumptions of Truth. Poststructuralist deny that any single discourse provides Truth, thus the moral authority of critical thought may not be assumed valid, but instead must be critiqued as a potential creator of hegemony.

Framing a Poststructuralist Critique

Thus far I have discussed how poststructuralism is grounded in a postmodern framework, and how it differs from a critical approach. These similarities and differences provide and challenge notions of meaning, knowledge, and power. How we understand these concepts, and more importantly, the manner in which these are related is key to understanding poststructuralist inquiry. The following section attempts to articulate a poststructuralist framework by which meaning, knowledge and power are deconstructed, thus illustrating a methodology for the practice of poststructuralism and articulating a beginning justification for the utilization of poststructuralism and deconstruction as tools for qualitative inquiry, and in particular, this study.

Where meaning, knowledge and power are practiced. As previously noted, the manner by which meaning is created is a key concern of and focus in poststructuralism. Grounded in a postmodern appreciation that meaning(s) is/are created via interaction and negotiation, poststructuralism denies that a singular meaning may be captured or understood. This does not necessarily equate to an "anything goes" mentality however, for in alignment with critical thought, such meaning(s) may be tools for or reflect hegemonic power relations. Thus while poststructuralism will not argue for a particular critique of meaning, the process of critiquing all meaning is assumed to be a valid and worthy process (Powell, 2007).

In response to the work of Saussure, poststructuralism argues that meaning is not based upon a reference point, rather it emerges as an understanding of difference (Belsey, 2002). I understand this to mean that we may only "know" or create meaning of something via our ability to compare it to something else. Saussure posited that meaning resigns in signs, and said signs were composed of two parts; the signifier is the visual or auditory representation and the signified is the meaning attached to that representation (Belsey, 2002). Thus the meaning we attach to an event, an experience, or an observation results from a conscious or unconscious comparison to a previously negotiated event, experience, or observation.

A key consequence of this argument is that I cannot assume the "true" meaning of anything, including the language used to explain, describe, or translate our understanding. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary (Belsey, 2002), hence discourse is not a window by which to view and understand the world, rather it becomes a mechanism by which meaning is created, not necessarily found (Powell, 2007). Differences in meaning can be reflected in differences of, in, and by language. These perceived difference(s) in language, and via language, rests with the reader of the text (Belsey, 2002).

Truth as a meaning. With an acceptance that meanings, via language, are not grounded in a singular understanding, poststructuralism thus speaks to the authority of Truth. The question becomes not what is Truth, but rather, what are our assumptions about Truth. To this extent, I must consider and remember that meaning is created in comparison to and found in the difference of other meanings. Personal understanding and meaning as well is grounded in a relationship with others. "I" can only know myself as I interact and relate to

others, thus even what "I" claim to know as true is negotiated within this interaction. Meaning only represents my negotiation with others, and in perceived differences with others, not through identification with others (St.Pierre, 2000).

Barthes asserts that the idea of "I" is a signifier, in that the person attaching that concept to a personal experience attempts to establish a sort of authority in the sense of experience and identity. This becomes a critique of authority in that the author is only ever a fragment of an instance (Belsey, 2002). There is nothing more "real" or "true" behind the text, in the words or mind of the author, regarding a piece of work, than there is for the reader of the text (Powell, 2007). "Truth" is not subjective; rather it is an ideal that we attempt, when we concern ourselves with finding the "right" answer (Belsey, 2002).

Knowledge as power. An unattainable truth creates issues as it relates to the construction, identification, and authority of knowledge. A poststructuralist critique first asks that I consider my assumptions of what constitutes or defines knowledge. Foucault argued that the dominant mode of discourse, as grounded in science, has sought to impose upon and categorize consequently, meanings of what is and is not normal in human behavior, thus effectively providing opportunity for knowledge of such discourse to act as agents of power and manipulation (Foucault, 1972/1982). Knowledge then represents a reflection of discourses constructed within specific historical periods, termed "regimes of truth" by Foucault that act as parameters by which current and future understandings of truth may be constructed. As a means of challenging said power relations, poststructuralism asks how meaning becomes knowledge, versus what is/is not knowledge (Powell, 2007).

Poststructuralism and Qualitative Inquiry

Inherent within a poststructuralist discussion of meaning, knowledge and power is an acknowledgement that "regimes of truth" may better represent power relations than an objective understanding of the social world, and additionally, may be utilized as a means of domination versus emancipation. Consequently, as Foucault points out (Wilkin, 1999), it is assumed that alternative understandings and frameworks for the study of society are available, and that such alternatives may have been marginalized and perhaps excluded from consideration. In this case, a prominent inquiry of poststructuralism relates to the power relations inherent within and reflective of discourse, with the aim of making visible the marginalized or excluded alternative understandings.

Kogan (2005) argues for recognizing that individual assumptions regarding knowledge are grounded in social and cultural contexts. Thus, individual assumptions may reflect larger, more implicit social practices and norms that legitimate continued hegemony. Poststructuralism, however, contends that such context, namely culture, consists of the ongoing production and reproduction of meanings by and within the subjective experience of humans (Belsey, 2002). Derrida (1976/1997), a poststructuralist, argues that our ability to understand or capture such understanding is limited, because all understanding is relative to identifiers that are different from or reference other identifiers. Poststructuralism argues that an essential and universal truth is unattainable (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008), because such claims of truth at best represent specific power relations via discourse (Foucault, 1972/1982).

A poststructuralist framework understands reality not as a fixed, stable concept, but as reflective of and encompassing multiple truths (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). Such truths emerge

from the production and regulation of knowledge within discursive communities, which includes text, speech, and performance (Foucault, 1980). Thus a poststructuralist framework cannot suppose one, "truthful" understanding of or one appropriate reaction to an issue. A poststructuralist foundation for qualitative inquiry must then allow for continued critique of meaning, knowledge, and power, and can subsequently be practiced via the utilization of deconstruction.

Application and Alignment with Qualitative Research

Qualitative research likewise allows for an understanding that meaning is socially constructed via a social context and social interaction (Baptiste, 2001; Merriam, 2009). Unlike quantitative research, which argues for an objective reality that can be captured, a qualitative approach does not assert a single, authoritative understanding (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative research's acknowledgement of multiple understandings, and an appreciation of reality as socially constructed and negotiated align then with a poststructuralist critique of reality and knowledge.

Additionally, qualitative research does not assume the inherent validity of socially constructed categories, but is instead inclined to consider the process of social interaction, specifically as it relates to meaning as constructed and experienced by participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As an interpretive, evolving process, qualitative research assumes that the research as well is emerging, and only ever captures some understanding, versus a full and complete understanding (Creswell, 2007). Baptiste (2001) argues that qualitative research is not meant to reflect what is already "known" about experience, but rather it should provide opportunity for greater and deeper understanding about the experience.

Allowed within this exploration is an understanding of the researcher's role and participation in the creation of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), which further aligns with a poststructuralist understanding that I, as a reader of the text, have made meaning of the research as it differs from and is placed within contexts.

Research Design

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that seeks to question and understand experiences within the realm of stories (Schwandt, 2007). This study incorporated aspects of narrative inquiry as the methodology by which data was recognized, valued, and later, deconstructed. Data refers to information and understanding, and narrative inquiry acknowledges that stories are a form of data, in that individuals make meaning in constructing said stories, and likewise the reader makes meaning through the interpretation of the story (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry allows that rhetoric, in the form of stories, life histories, graffiti, testimonies, etc., illustrates one's knowing of the world and may describe how one constructs an understanding of the world via personal experience and negotiation (Patton, 2002). Biographical studies, psychological studies, discourse analysis, and a linguistic approach are means by which narrative inquiry are conducted (Merriam, 2009). As used in this study, I adopted narrative inquiry as a sociolinguistic approach for analyzing text that comprised a story (Riessman, 1993), with an understanding that these stories were the means by which self and experiences were given meaning (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1991).

To do so, I acknowledged the structure and substance of the narrative as important elements of a story, with a focus upon how articulated events and actions created a specified

meaning (Merriam, 2009). This meaning is not necessarily grounded within the information as simply stated or recorded; rather the researcher is required to have an understanding that how the information was constructed by the participant, and for whom and why it was constructed in this particular manner, provides insight (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). The meaning of the issue evolves through the telling of the account (Andrews, Squire, & Tambokou, 2008), and it may be that only by looking back upon events or in the retelling of events (Polkinghorne, 1996) does the narrator establish a meaning. Narrative inquiry was particularly appropriate for this study, in part because it acknowledged both the individual's experience of society (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and the means by which said experience was given meaning (Chase, 2005). Given that social class is a socially constructed concept that only has consequence when given meaning, i.e. how one is perceived or treated by others, then a study about perceptions of social class must likewise appreciate that reality is also interpreted and constructed (Bruner, 1990). Narrative inquiry holds that truth emerges from the interpretation of experience (Riessman, 2003), and via storytelling, a point of view is provided that reflects what the participant finds meaningful and thus significant.

A key aspect of this study was to make visible that which is invisible, and thus denied critique; the presence of class-based assumptions and frameworks in faculty perceptions of working-class students. Narrative inquiry provided the opportunity for faculty interviews to reflect a cultural context and construction (Crossley, 2002) of education's relationship to social class. These stories then emphasized not "what happens" in a factual sense, but rather, "what is important" to the narrator. After collecting these narratives via the interview process, I wove those descriptions into an understanding (Polkinghorne, 1996) reflecting

deconstruction as a means to reveal theoretical and ethical assumptions of social class, and specifically inequality as they reflect upon and influence the experience of working-class. In short, I aimed to connect an understanding of faculty perceptions of working-class students back to the stories of working-class students' experiences in and with higher education. Such data provides researchers "windows into cultural and social meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 116). Too, and in alignment with a focus of qualitative research upon the "natural" setting (Merriam, 2009), this approach illustrated an acknowledgement that individuals, on an everyday basis, attempt to construct, negotiate, and share their lived experiences through narratives, (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

A story, as defined for this study, used Riessman's (1993) argument that first-person accounts of experiences reflect a basic concept of narrative as story. Additionally, and especially as it relates to the analysis of data, the specific categories of plot, events, and protagonists are identified as elements to the telling of a "story" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) regarding working-class students. Discourses are social, cultural, and historical shared practices of meaning (Archer, 2003a). Within this definition, I also included Denzin's (1989) suggestion that stories have a beginning, middle, and end aspect that to the narrator represents a structured and negotiated understanding of events and experiences. This focus on the structure, in addition to the content, of stories aligned with deconstruction of interpretations to explore community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students, specifically as these understandings reflected class-based frameworks and assumptions

Deconstruction

Deconstruction as a means of critiquing and decentering these interpretations was utilized. To an extent then, I followed the work of Tierney (2000) and Boje (1995), both of whom argue that specifically given a postmodern understanding of truth, multiple and contradictory versions, testimonies, and stories regarding experiences represent valid data by which to acknowledge and destabilize power relations. The key to such validation is grounded in an epistemological understanding that singular, objective, and authoritative research is unavailable and hence undesirable. The "truth" of stories is not necessarily a given; rather, the constructed understanding and negotiation of a lived experience, as *a* truth becomes the basis by which I approached this study.

Deconstruction is a tool or technique most often associated with Jacques Derrida (1976/1996), and it understands that power relations were inherent within, represented with, and recreated via the opposition of text and speech. In identifying and critiquing the practice of text and speech, norms regarding usage and practice become apparent. As a "norm", these practices come to be seen as representing truth and value, a universal understanding. This status then represents privilege, by which all other practices are evaluated. In such a way, text and speech come to be seen in opposition to one another, with non-normative aspects of either devalued. Because assumptions of reality, truth and knowledge represent (un)acknowledged ideologies, deconstruction is particularly useful for making visible that which is considered the norm, and thus privileged from examination and critique.

To this extent, my study explored that which is (de)emphasized, (over)looked, or (de)valued within assumptions, as expressed and given meaning in text or speech.

Deconstructive analysis explores how conceptual oppositions may be reinterpreted as belonging to or emerging from a common or similar dependent concept (Balkin, 1990). Within this study, data in the form of stories captured via interviews, illustrate one's knowing of the world as negotiated within and against contexts and understandings (Patton, 2002), and emerged as "texts" to be read and given meaning by the researcher. Additionally, said texts reflected specific beliefs and practices as they relate to the definition and (de)valuing of social class.

Deconstruction was utilized to show the structure of what is known, as it represents a continuously negotiated social and individual experience (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In identifying and recognizing the signifiers in text, meaning was acknowledged as constructed and reflected. Deconstruction further acknowledges the binary categories by which difference creates meaning; to this degree then, it is not what the sign means, but how the sign comes to have meaning that is the focus of this analysis (Powell, 2007). Deconstructive analysis was used as a tool for decentering the assumed normal meaning of text through an exploration of how conceptual oppositions could be reinterpreted as belonging to or emerging from a common or similar dependent concept (Balkin, 1990).

Deconstruction in this study aimed to make visible that which is assumed, overlooked or taken for granted, in the perceptions of working-class students by faculty. This study used the three broad theoretical paradigms discussed in Chapter 2, functionalist, conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist, as the basis by which perceptions of working-class students were critiqued. Each theoretical framework was dissected to reflect unacknowledged perceptions of class, and specifically working-class students. By reframing each theoretical perspective in

terms of how working-class students may be valued or devalued, these binaries provided this study's framework for decentering, and thus making visible, the issue of social class. In doing so, I sought to challenge not only what is known about the perception of working-class students, but also how those perceptions or meanings evolve from specific assumptions about social class as a whole. This further allowed me to acknowledge that my single interpretation of the data does not signify an authority voice (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005); rather, reconstructing the data against three very different frameworks retells and thus recreates multiple-meanings for the audience.

Participants and Sampling

This study incorporated purposeful sampling, as defined by Patton (2002), for I chose to select "information rich cases" to study in greater depth the degree to which faculty perceptions of working-class students reflect classed assumptions (p. 230). Faculty members were my unit of analysis. As Patton argues, and as aligned with my postmodern and poststructural resistance to a singular and authoritative sense of Truth, I sought to understand class-based assumptions in greater detail and presupposed that consequentially, additional understandings and questions may arise. Thus the ability of my study to speak for all, in terms of generalizability, was not desired or assumed possible. Purposeful sampling, in the sense that I seek those who, in my judgment, could serve the purpose of this study through their experience, reflections, and willingness to participate led me to consider my current place of employment, a large urban community college, as the site by which participants were recruited.

Additionally, I assumed that the participants, given the nature of the study, have a predisposition to reflective practices and concern for pedagogical issues. I completed the paperwork for the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix A), and received approval. The advantages of being employed at the same educational institution as the participants include my contacts within the various departments and divisions, and my own understanding of past and present college-wide policies and initiatives that may form a backdrop by which faculty share their experiences. I articulated in my notes the extent to which these previous relationships and understanding may have been influential in my interpretation of the data, thereby meeting a goal of transparency in the data analysis section of this study.

Participants were recruited from Central Community College, which has historically served a large proportion of working-class individuals, and currently serves approximately 70,000 individuals each year. The college is located in Big City, North Carolina, and provides a range of services across several campuses. Participants were full-time curriculum faculty members stationed at the primary campus, Central Campus. The justification for selecting Central Campus is that it houses the largest number of full-time faculty, and as well, serves the largest number of students. Full-time curriculum faculty were the target sample, in order to best represent individuals most aligned with and cognizant of the larger culture of the college, and too, because the literature states that the majority of classes offered at the community college level are taught by full-time faculty. Additionally, it was assumed that these faculty members will also then have more contact with working-class students, versus adjunct faculty, whose extent of teaching may be limited.

All recruited participants encompassed characteristics and responsibilities required by the college for employment as instructors, which include the following: experience with online and Elearning technology, minimum annual professional development, an emphasis upon teaching and learning, a commitment to serve the college through committee membership, a minimum number of office hours dedicated to student advising and consultation, and continued competency in the field or discipline. Additional college policies reflected by selecting full-time curriculum faculty included a minimum course load of teaching at least half face-to-face courses as opposed to teaching all distance learning classes, and an understanding of community college curriculum as it connects to both future career and academic goals of students.

Participants were recruited by an invitation made available through the school newsletter (see Appendix B). The recruiting materials explained the purpose of the study, and outlined the criteria by which participants would be chosen. Ten participants were selected in accordance with the criteria outlined in the recruitment materials. Two potential participants were not selected because one was actually a work-study student, and the other taught only developmental classes. Each participant engaged in two separate interviews, resulting in a minimum of twenty contact hours.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected via loosely-structured interviews with participants. This informal conversational approach (Patton, 2002) allowed sufficient flexibility required of story-telling on the part of participants, and opportunity for me as the interviewer to respond accordingly as I encountered the need for clarification or understanding. Participants were asked for

consent (Appendix C), and then engaged in an initial one-hour interview, and one follow-up interview (see Appendix D). Faculty members were asked in the first meeting to share their perceptions of working-class students, and how their own pedagogy or practices aligned with working-class students. In a second meeting (see Appendix E), faculty answered additional questions to clarify their perspectives of the working-class student. Faculty members were invited to add to or challenge these interpretations. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Member checks also included the sharing of my initial analysis, once transcripts were completed. Recordings were deleted upon transcription, and the transcription files are saved on my personal computer, which requires a password to access.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis is making sense of or organizing the data in a way that helps answer the research questions (Patton, 1990). Borrowing from Baptiste (2001), I started by tagging the data, thus identifying and selecting from the interviews that information which aligned with my research study. I began with serial tagging (Baptiste, 2001), which means I analyzed each transcript and within that transcript, identified "significant statements" that captured the description of the experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). I then began the process of parallel tagging (Baptiste, 2001), whereby I compared and analyzed meanings across the transcripts. During this initial phase, I maintained a research journal, in which I reflected upon my own feelings, reactions, and interpretation of events (Patton, 1990). Additionally, I utilized marginal remarks (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a means of staying engaged with the data, and recording possible alternative understanding.

From these significant statements, I interpreted “clusters of meanings” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61) or categories of meaning (Baptiste, 2001), which is the initial stage of coding of data. Coding refers to the ability to take tagged data and group it as it relates to shared characteristics (Baptiste, 2001). These shared characteristics, or themes, became the backdrop from which binary categories of meaning were identified, thus beginning the deconstruction of meaning as it applied to class-based assumptions and understanding. The literature on how various theories perceive the issue of social class and education provided the basis for the thematic clusters.

Deconstructive analysis explores how conceptual oppositions (in this case, the de/valuing of students) may be reinterpreted as belonging to or emerging from a common or similar dependent concept (in this case, social class) (Balkin, 1990). Because understanding may represent (un)acknowledged ideologies, deconstruction was particularly useful as a means of making visible that which is privileged within faculty perceptions. To this extent, I examined what is deemphasized, overlooked, or assumed within the faculty members' stories of working-class students. These binary categories reflected the three theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Two, functionalism, conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist as they define and frame class location, inequality, and value.

Table A: THEORETICAL CODING OF FACULTY PERCEPTIONS

(Functionalist Perspective)

THEORY	ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CLASS	BINARY CATEGORIES	
	Higher Education and Social Class	VALUED	DEVALUED
FUNCTIONALIST	Stratification reflects a societal mandate regarding the needs of society, and ultimately supports the values of said society (Crompton, 2008), in the form of unequal incentives. Inequality represents the "natural" hierarchy of individual effort, intelligence, and worth; merit alone determines one's ascension in society, and social class positionality further represents one's merit. Inequality, as it relates to social class, is justified, explained, and excused (Crompton, 2008). Higher education becomes a resource by which individual achievement is fulfilled. Individuals make choices regarding educational attainment that allow them to find their niche in an existing economic system (Bradley, 1996).	Doing well and "right" in college reflects a functional experience, for the individual and for society.	Not doing well or "right" in college reflects a dysfunctional experience, for the individual and for society.

Table B: THEORETICAL CODING OF FACULTY PERCEPTIONS

(Conflict Perspective)

THEORY	ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CLASS	BINARY CATEGORIES	
	Higher Education and Social Class	VALUED	DEVALUED
CONFLICT	Stratification reflects different groups' experiences with power and exploitation (Wright, 2000). Social class is understood as a system of inequality, as it relates to material conditions, and different groups' access to these conditions thus influencing their position of having or not having power (Zweig, 2000). Social class is a continual conflict between two or more groups, within the context of and influenced by specific economic systems. Higher education is a resource and mechanism of control by which advantaged groups may maintain their privilege. Higher education is a means by which disadvantaged or exploited groups challenge the status quo.	Attainment of higher education represents a means by which to change one's class standing.	Lack of higher education ensures continued exploitation, as represented by a lower social class standing.

Table C: THEORETICAL CODING OF FACULTY PERCEPTIONS

(Interactionist/Interpretivist Perspective)

THEORY	ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CLASS	BINARY CATEGORIES	
	Higher Education and Social Class	VALUED	DEVALUED
INTERPRETAVIST/ INTERACTIONIST	Social class can be understood as a process of interaction and interpretation. Class is explored at times as a process, a negotiation, as personal, and as a culture (Archer, 2003a). Stratification reflects material and cultural capital in which both determine status, class membership, and experience with class struggles (Bourdieu, 1987). Class membership refers to individuals who share conditions of social existence and class is symbolic to and of a lived experience. Habitus, defined as a socially constructed system of dispositions by which one's perceptions and actions originate (Wright, 2005), is considered as a means by which class is experienced. Higher education reflects an arena by which identity and culture are interpreted and constructed against social class boundaries.	A middle-class identity and culture are deemed appropriate and are encouraged and/or sought.	A working-class identity and culture are deemed inappropriate and require modification.

Upon completion of coding significant statements against the binary categories in Tables A-B, I separated the statements according to the specific theory. For example, all statements that related back to the binary categories of a functionalist perspective formed a data set. This data set became the material by which I recreated a perception of working-class students. Given that there are three general theoretical frameworks, this formed three frameworks for understanding of how community college faculty members could perceive working-class students. The basis of each understanding represented specific assumptions and understandings, reflective of a particular theoretical standing. These understandings then, together, represented and made visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students.

Issues of Rigor

Qualitative research cannot follow the same protocol as quantitative research in regards to issues of validity and reliability, and in particular, these concepts are not easily applicable to this study, given a poststructuralist inclination towards critique. However, it is still important to provide a level of trustworthiness, which is defined here as the ability to acknowledge and control for bias to the extent that subsequent researchers can explicitly trace my choices in the research process, and would come to similar conclusions about that data. I discuss three key areas of trustworthiness in the following sections on credibility and confirmability, borrowing the language put forth by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as a means of having addressed traditional research concerns of validity and objectivity.

Credibility. Validity, in a quantitative sense, refers to the extent to which something is being measured in an intended fashion. This approach assumes a singular and correct

understanding or interpretation, and defines the extent to which findings represent reality (More & Field, 1995). Qualitative research, and in particular a poststructuralist study, cannot align with this approach. I there sought to establish credibility.

A postmodern, interpretivist approach to validity "acknowledges that all research takes place in, is addressed to, and serves the community in which the research occurs" (Creswell, 2007, p. 212). To this extent, I assert that the interviews reflect a co-construction of "reality" and as such, will allow the perceptions to come forth and "name their oppressor" (Freire, 1970/2000). Thus both aspects of critical inquiry and postmodernism determine to an extent how validity, and hence, trustworthiness are evaluated in this study. In contrast to this assertion, however, is an appreciation of Wolcott's argument (1990, as cited in Creswell, 2007) that "validation" does not accurately represent the goal of qualitative research, which should be to explore and understand an issue.

What is real and what is truth are dependent upon our assumptions regarding these constructs, and for this study, I did not seek to attain what I did not think is possible. In this sense, I have articulated my postmodern beliefs that knowledge, and particularly the knowledge gained via this study, are a consequence of and set within specific cultural and social contexts (Bloland, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The inability of my study to capture what is "the" Truth simply reflects what Lather (1991) argues is the reconceptualization of validity to allow for an understanding that research may provide questions versus answers, given an acknowledgement that research can at best capture what is a situated, partial understanding.

I did not strive for verification that this study is accurate in a "final" sense, but I do argue that the process of reflection, study, research, and discourse I maintained throughout the study represents a process of validity (Argen, 2000) or rather, credibility, by which I am subject to critique in much the same manner by which the participants' perceptions were critiqued. Through triangulation this study represents validation, in that I voiced and provided various theoretical frameworks to conceptualize the study and deconstruct the findings. Finally, the use of member checks (Borkan, 1999) provided opportunity for participants to validate the research process, and for me to reflect upon what I perceived to be emerging from the research.

Confirmability. Objectivity refers, in a quantitative sense, to the ability of research to capture knowledge that is free from personal experience and bias. The assumption is that objectivity ensures that the subsequent research findings represent understanding that is separate from the researcher, and thus may be accepted as more "true." In qualitative research, it is accepted and understood that the researcher may co-construct the research findings, and as such, objectivity is not only impossible but also undesirable. This is particularly true for this study, as I have outlined and articulated a firm belief and alignment with postmodern ontological and epistemological frameworks. Instead, I sought to establish a sense of confirmability, meaning that I established a trail of research that allows others to understand the choices I made, as a subjective co-constructor of the knowledge.

I acknowledged my own subjective relationship to the topic via a research journal, and engagement in various discussions with colleagues and peers regarding said topic in order to provide an "external check of the research process," (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Merriam, 2009). I cannot remove my biases from the study, but I worked continuously to identify their influence upon the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and made this personal critical reflection an aspect of the study in such a way so that other researchers may understand and come to similar conclusions regarding my interpretation of the data.

Limitations and Strengths of Study

Limitations. The limitations of this study coincide with the theoretical parameters of my chosen approach to knowledge, truth, and reality. I cannot assert that my interpretation of the results is an accurate representation of "truth." As stated previously, the inability of my study to capture what is true simply reflects what Lather (1991) argues is the reconceptualization of validity, which allows for an understanding that research can at best capture what is situated, partial understanding. As a qualitative study, results are not generalizable or replicable, in the sense that they may be applied to larger contexts. This study cannot suppose or purport a direct causal relationship into faculty perceptions of working-class students and the documented experiences of working-class students. Additionally, given my chosen sample of participants, community-college faculty members, the cultural context of this particular type of higher education may be reflected, although not necessarily critiqued, in the data. I understand as well that it may have be difficult for faculty to articulate understandings of social class, given that it is often an unacknowledged issue.

Strengths. The strengths of this study also align with my epistemological and ontological stances. In the literature regarding the experience of social class and education, the object of study has often been the disadvantaged-classed individual. The culture and structure of higher education has also been examined. But I what I sought in this study was

to give voice to another understanding of the situation, and that is the unacknowledged presence of social class as a means by which higher education is experienced, via faculty member perceptions of working-class students. To this extent, I have challenged notions of an objective truth regarding the issue, and provoked, hopefully, further debate and inquiry into what we already know about the experience of working-class students. At a pragmatic level, better understanding of the working-class student's experiences in higher education provides opportunity for faculty and administration to initiate and create a more positive and supportive environment for working-class students. The entrance, presence, and success of working-class students in higher education promote our society's values of diversity, opportunity, and class mobility.

Positionality and Subjectivity

Axiology may be defined as the area in which the researcher reflects upon her values in the research, the role of research subjects, and appropriate use of the final research product (Baptiste, 2001). In this section on positionality and subjectivity, I seek to make visible my values, as they were integrated with the research process. As already discussed in Chapter 1, I acknowledge that my personal experiences are indicative of larger social issues (Mills, 1959/2000), and present them as valued aspects of this study. Wilson (2001) argues that adult educators should seek to reflect upon the ethical and political consequences of our practices, and I seek to meet this challenge through ongoing discussions of my role, perceptions, and practices as they evolve from and influence this study.

As also discussed in Chapter 1, much of what I had felt as a former working-class student and continue to experience as an faculty member found voice in the studies of Zandy

(1996), Adair and Dahlberg (2003), Tokarczyk and Fay (1993), and Law (1995). These studies illustrate the struggles that working-class individuals face within higher education. I am currently employed as a sociology instructor at an urban community college. I have also taught as an adjunct faculty member at various four-year colleges and universities. As a full-time faculty member at a community college, I have sought and been engaged with various faculty professional development programs, and I have led such programs as they relate to critical thinking, pedagogical assumptions, and academic standards of practice. These activities illustrate my interest in and engagement with faculty perceptions of and experiences with teaching, learning, and the role of education.

My personal negotiation of what it means to be educated, knowledgeable, and valued as an individual was and is done in a classed context. Although others may not recognize that each context, including the classroom, reflects classed understanding, values, and experiences, this does not, I argue, make my experience any less truthful or relevant. Rather it highlights my perceived need to bring forward those assumptions within faculty perceptions as they particularly influence the experience of higher education for working-class individuals. To this extent, my assumptions indicate alignment with and argue for the role and practice of advocacy (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). In seeking to better understand the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students, I am following in the footsteps of other scholars who are intent on change and reform, such as Freire (1970/2000), by seeking to make visible that while invisible, is granted immunity from critique and change.

Summary

In this chapter I provided a discussion of my chosen theoretical and methodological approaches for this study. Inherent within this discussion are my articulated understandings of why specifically a qualitative approach was appropriate, and in particular, how a poststructuralist understanding supported and aligned with the study's purpose, which was to explore community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students, as these understandings reflect class-based frameworks and assumptions. Community-college faculty members were interviewed, and from these interviews their perceptions of working-class students were deconstructed as a means of making visible the issue of social class as it influences the experience of higher education. In Chapter 4, I present the findings as they answer the study's questions.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty members' perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature-based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a coding structure by which the findings were analyzed and reported. Interviews with community college faculty members and deconstruction of these interviews as a means of critique was utilized to address the following research questions:

How do community college faculty members perceive working-class students?

How are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perception of working-class students?

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from this study; first by describing the characteristics of the participants, followed by a presentation of participants' interviews containing key concepts and reflecting pertinent comments aligned with the coding mechanism. These comments are then organized according to how they followed and created meaning from and via the interview guides. Finally, these findings were organized in terms of how they answered the question "how do community college faculty perceive working-class students?" The chapter ends with a summary of these findings.

Participant Characteristics

The participants in this study were comprised of ten full-time curriculum faculty members centered at a single campus of an urban community college in a southeastern state. Four of the participants are female and six are male. The duration of their teaching experience ranged from over 20 years to less than five years. The following disciplines were represented: history, sociology, psychology, religious studies, philosophy, math, English/literature, art, and biology. All participants had a minimum of a master's degree in their respective field. The majority had taught previously as an adjunct faculty member at a community college and at a four-year college. Roughly a third had also worked in a different field at some point in their career. Half of the respondents indicated in their interviews that they identified as having come from a working-class/lower social class background. All participants were currently teaching face-to-face classes, and a majority had experience teaching online courses. All participants, in addition to teaching, performed other responsibilities such as advising and serving on college committees.

Participant Stories

Juanita

Juanita comes from a long history of educators in her family, and initially sought student services as a means of continuing that legacy. She recently moved into teaching, and expresses positive opinions of her current position, calling it "good and honorable work", full of meaning and significant. She describes the community college as a place where individuals struggling with real-world problems such as homelessness, poverty, and addiction find "their last chance." As many of the participants also discuss, becoming aware of these

issues is a major theme in faculty perception of students. Juanita connects this awareness back to her earlier comments about the meaning found in teaching in her statement "to be a part of that journey is kind of scary and eye-opening and awe-inspiring at the same time." She differentiates this experience from that at a four-year college by stating that students at the community college "need more than just instruction and because of that, "you're more of a life coach at the community college." The diversity of students, their experiences, and needs are also noted, both as a challenge and as a benefit. When asked to specifically define "working-class", Juanita offered:

> I'm just over broke. I got enough, can make ends meet, may not be working now, but there is an expectation that they've got to work and be that resource for others...they may be working at a job or at school...they're working and it ties to they don't have the nickels to rub together.

Examples of occupations was offered, and included cleaning buildings, driving trucks, and cutting hair, and Juanita noted that the time of day one takes a shower identifies whether one is working-class or not; if one takes a shower before work, one is middle-class, but if one takes a shower after work, one is working-class. Admiration was placed upon those who identify as working-class, with Juanita saying "its that grit that makes our country go."

Juanita makes a link between education and inequality, specifically stating that the more one has in terms of income and wealth, the higher level of educational culture one attains. She remarks that this becomes a problem for those without access to specific class/cultural understanding because when they then enter into higher education, they are unprepared for the expectations placed upon them:

> Some of our students don't have the same support we had, we have our own language in higher education which is not constant with others things in our culture. So when we ask people about, 'Hey have you taken the prerequisite for that?' they have no idea what that word even means. They'll nod and shake their head because they don't want to appear stupid or that they don't know. They'll walk away from a conversation not understanding what happened because they don't have the context to actually get it. Resources dictate language we know and don't know. And also whether we are willing to ask questions. If you've never known anybody that went to college, how would you know that you need to go to class? How do you know that unless someone tells you? It's an educational cultural expectation.

Juanita argues that educators make assumptions about students. She states that she tells students to "fake it until you make it" as a means of learning the culture of higher education, and saving face as they do so. She articulates that for many students, entering into college is similar to culture shock, and she worries that students can't identify with their instructors or fellow students. In regards to learning, Juanita connects the work experience of working-class individuals to her perception of their experience in the classroom:

> They have history of punching out widgets...they have no idea how to critically think, that was someone else's job, I'm paid to punch out widgets, but now you expect me to come in, think critically, be able to write, to read to do all these things that weren't a priority for me before.

When asked if she could tell if a particular student was working-class, Juanita replied, "I can't." Rather, she remarked that only during interaction with a student, and specifically through a conversation, would she be able to identify if a student is working-class class. In part, Juanita doesn't intentionally seek to look at their class position, but attempts to "figure out their balance of working and being in school." Some clues or indicators of social class that Juanita does look at include the student's ability to manage school responsibilities with work/family responsibilities. When asked about her interactions with working-class students, Juanita states, "I came from a just over broke home" and she articulates that she uses this background to be supportive of her students, providing advice, strategies and tools to get through the system. She comments that working-class students are more likely to fall through the cracks because as an institution, their needs are not seen or acknowledged. Those specific challenges for working-class students center on the multiple-responsibilities and roles they carry, such as working, being a student, and caring for family. She remarked that they have a "solid work ethic...they are the hardest workers, and they push me...they are the ones who email you at midnight with questions...'can you help me to understand because I don't understand?'"

Juanita connects this behavior back to their class location, "they ask those questions, which keep me on my toes. They "latch on" and there is a desire to really learn, not just get by, some may see it as challenging you, but they are just wanting to understand ...they are thirsty for understanding." Juanita states that she believes the working-class student is more invested in the process of education, because the cost of an education for them is more readily felt in the wallet, and in their ability to meet the other responsibilities in their life,

"they realize either they're paying for it or they realize who's paying for it, so they're going to get every penny out if it, that worth. What's it worth? Return on investment." When asked about her interactions with working-class students, Juanita clearly felt she could identify with them because of her own classed background, and because of this empathy, could justify accommodations for the working-class student. Such accommodations may include extended time for assignments, or trimming back on material in order to provide students "a little air to breathe, cause I see that they get to that point where they are haggard and look beaten."

The next part of the interview focused on higher education and the experiences of working-class students in higher education. When asked about the purpose of higher education, Juanita remarked that there had been a change in higher education, away from a holistic approach to education towards skills and employment. The ability and mission of the community college to connect an individual to the workplace was noted as appropriate, but she also noted concern:

> The purpose of education should be helping our society go forward. Forward could be 'I worked in a textile plan and now I don't have that as an option and I'm going to come learn how to do medical coding.' I love/hate this...we become facilitators and managers versus educators...we don't ask them what their educational goal is, but I should because I'm an educator, not a career...when advising, we should focus on their educational goals, but we don't. As a society we link education to career.

In regards to how the purpose of higher education may vary for the working-class student, Juanita ties this back to earlier comments regarding the costs of education, and replies:

> It starts to become more of that question, will this help further me in my career? Return on investment. Time is precious for them, money is precious for them. They want a return on this investment of going to college, how it is going to help my family? I can't afford to do something that isn't going to help my family.

This exploration of higher education and the working-class student continued with the question of how the working-class student experiences higher education. Juanita responded that the culture of working-class is different from that of higher education, and because of this, students suffer:

> They have no clue and we speak a language that is unlike anything else. They don't have context for higher education...it is a struggle because they are not only learning content of classroom but also having to learn the system of higher education...and this is different at community college level, and they are going to be shell-shocked when they go to four-year college, because the context is different, and they don't have the same involvement there.

Juanita further commented that sharing her own personal experience as a working-class student is a means by which she tries to alleviate this struggle. "I think this does one of two things; either that will further scare them or what I hope that it does is they can identify... It is out of our own failure that we're trying to help you to learn." She comments that the instructor's power in the classroom is greater than that of the student, and thus the self-worth of the student must be considered in the interactions one has with the student.

Joe

Like several of the participants, Joe did not intend to go into academics. His mother was a teacher, and he perceived that teaching encompassed a great deal of work, with little pay. Joe began his own business, but felt that he was not serving larger society and so he sought out teaching part-time as a means of exploring academia. Once he began teaching, he "fell in love with it" and decided that this was the profession for him. For Joe, teaching provided the opportunity to try new things, and to help students. This opportunity to help students had two aspects. First, as Joe put it, "if we don't do it, then that means we're just giving up on these people." Second, he claimed that in helping students, one ultimately helps society.

In regards to the community college, and specifically community college students, Joe discussed the variety and diversity of students in both positive and frustrating terms. For example, he states in regards to some students "I don't know what they're doing here...they either have no desire or no abilities...it's like, you're not ready for this. You shouldn't be here." On the other side, Joe comments that he encounters "really smart people" who attend community college for financial reasons only. The frustration over this diversity comes when trying to meet these different levels and needs in the classroom, and sometimes, says Joe, "I'm just at my end."

When asked to define "working-class", Joe states that one may not have a stable financial situation, and that lower income primarily determines this class location. Indictors for working-class also include clothing, speech, having few books at home, and having little support from family or friends to gain an education. Very often, students simple share their

identity as poor or coming from a disadvantaged background, such as "I went to a poor school." However, Joe states he does not try to assume based upon such indicators students' social class, but he admits he does, such as seeing a student working in the computer lab and concluding they do not have internet access at home. He assumes that middle class students grew up with technology, while the working-class does not. Additionally, he sees working-class students exhibiting "bad grammar" in part because they "don't know better." This lack of cultural capital extends in general as the working-class student "probably isn't ready to do the things that you assume students should be able to do right away." As a result, "you've really got to just start from the ground floor. You've got to do it in a way that's not demeaning or that they think they're being called out."

When asked about his interaction with working-class students, Joe comments that if he knows the student is working-class, he is more patient. He is adamant that this does not mean he assumes less intelligence on the part of the student, but rather that a lack of support at home or coming from a background with fewer resources requires a different understanding. Joe provides examples of fewer resources in the sense that such students may never have talked with guidance counselors in high school and experienced less parental engagement with learning, such as having been read to as a child.

The next part of the interview explored Joe's perception of higher education in general, and how this was experienced by or varied for the working-class student. Joe noted that higher education means different things for different populations, but as a whole was important for "increasing our collective human knowledge so important to society" and likewise important for and linked to the economic structure of society. For the working-class

student, higher education "means not being working-class." Joe comments that this is a rational expectation, "would someone want to stay working class?" and connects it back to an expectation of higher education in terms of transformation, "if you want to stay at working class...its almost why would you go to college?"

Joe felt that many working-class students do not feel ready for college, and ascertained that many might be correct in that judgment. For example, he noted that in not feeling as though they belong in college, working-class students may feel less confident to ask questions, thus ensuring that they do not gain the knowledge or experiences they need to successfully navigate the system. As a result, he attempts to make himself available and encourages students to ask questions. In doing so, Joe articulates concern about being able to do so in a meaningful and equitable manner, one that acknowledges the needs of working-class students, while fulfilling the mission of the college in developing appropriate workplace skills:

> I have to meet the needs of all kinds of students...you have to have this low common denominator, you have to know what the potential needs are and be prepared to deal with it. If I give opportunities sometimes (i.e., student misses an exam, and I let them make it up), I am continuing their poor habits...If you didn't follow the same rules for everybody and I'm letting you by, then the people that did do the quiz on time, now they're at a disadvantage...it is unsustainable for us to provide opportunities and fair opportunities to everyone.

Joe stated that social inequality exists, and that it is difficult to change. For example, he stated that most instructors are middle-class, and he doesn't know how well instructors can empathize and thus make change available if they don't have similar backgrounds to students. He offers his own assumptions to illustrate:

> I still catch myself...I assume students have common vocabulary, so I started making a vocabulary list that students need to know, in order to take exams. I say its for ESL students, but a lot of lower-income students will benefit as well...I don't think there are a lot of teachers taking the time to do that kind of thing...but it is a subtle way to level the playing field.

Joe argues that education should provide opportunities for everyone to get to where they want to go, and that must include content as well as skills such as the ability to do research and evaluate information sources. In addition to resources and knowledge, Joe notes that personal traits and characteristics of working-class students may be deficient and likewise require transformation:

> Many students just need that kick in the ass...they want somebody to do that, but they're so reluctant to start the conversation...so many of them need someone to tell them what to do, or to just keep trying...but for everyone one that comes to you, there's probably five that don't.

In response to this dilemma, Joe admits to frustration, shared by other instructors, about accommodations and equity, and when such understanding is functional versus dysfunctional:

> How many emails do you send...if you keep giving opportunities after a while the student is going to get the lesson that all they've got to do is ask and they'll come up with a sob story and the teacher will let them...

Not only does Joe worry about the consequence of acknowledging working-class challenges for the students' ability to learn the culture of higher education, but he also worries about when such accommodations lead to a "dumbing-down" of the material. Given the diversity of student needs and ability within a particular class, Joe argues that not only the working-class students, but also other students in the class then suffer as a result.

John

John didn't intend on going into teaching, however a teaching assistantship in graduate school changed his mind. Since then he has taught at the community college level, and states that it provides satisfaction and a feeling of making a difference in the lives of others. From a small, rural, historically black town, John identified with the needs and experiences of community college students. He described his hometown as a place where most people worked at minimum wage jobs, and just barely kept above poverty.

In his description of working at a community college, John states, "I absolutely see probably most of the people that I grew up with or am familiar with from my background. I can relate to the community college student." John describes the students perhaps not being ready for a four-year institution, "down to earth", and here with a purpose to better their lives, "they need a starting point with something that's affordable to them or can get them to that quick career track." John spent time describing the characteristics and needs of the community college student. He stated that they often lacked self-confidence, and sometimes

needed extra encouragement, "They need a little nurturing. Providing academics is good but sometimes we have to show that human side...that encouragement that just gives them that push along the way."

When asked to define "working-class," John offered the following, "careers that don't require much beyond high school, stuck into a level where there's not much room for advancement...you can also call it blue-collar." When asked how he could tell if a student was working-class, he spoke of students mentioning past careers, or not speaking of careers at all. A key indicator was also dress, "I see someone come in with a red shirt and khakis, I know they may be going to work later at McDonalds or Burger King." Additionally, using his own past experiences, John said that sometimes the ways students described their life experiences may identify them as working-class. Speech as well was mentioned as an indicator. John stated that language, speech patterns, how students respond to a question, or even how they try to ask a question gives him some insight into their classed position.

John was at ease in discussing his ability to identify working-class students, in his ability to identify with them, and their value:

> I relate to them, I am first-generation college student...I see working-class as an opportunity, the hard work my parents put in, made it easier for me to have those opportunities, I have high respect for the working class...working-class is probably the most honest and sincere people I know.

Likewise, John spoke of the challenges for working-class students. He stated that many of the challenges for working-class students was financially related, and gave the examples of worrying about having gas to get to campus, having money for food or being hungry in class,

and "bouncing around from place to place" because one may not have a stable living arrangement. He perceives that working-class students suffer an additional barrier in regards to these issues in that they are unaware of the resources available at the school, such as the availability of computer labs or even where the library is located. He uses these examples to frame a benefit of being a working-class student, "they have nothing to lose, so they're just going to go for it."

John shared a personal story of having dealt with a working-class student. By accident, he was able to help direct a student to a particular location on campus. John later heard from the student about the incident. The student told John that had John not been there at that moment to help him, he (the student) would not still be in college. John relayed the comment of the student, "well, this college things is not for me. I'm going to give up and just go back home." John discussed how this student had felt overwhelmed and unwelcomed. John remembers this story in part because he says the encounter was "totally unintentional" and yet had such impact upon the student's continuation in college. John admits to acting differently with working-class students, "but not in a bad way." He states that he tries to be more specific, give more details, clarify expectations, use real-world situations, and to make topics relevant to the students' experiences.

When asked about the purpose of higher education, John describes the financial and economic aspects that higher educational attainment provides. He also comments that higher education provides the credentials required for entry into an economic system. For working-class students, "they are just interested in just making sure that they are attaining employment", and "not take over the world." John states that the immediate needs and

situation associated with the working-class does not allow for high expectations or far-reaching plans; rather the working-class student is thinking, "how will I survive a year from now?"

John also talked of how the culture and setting of higher education is different for the working-class student. This difference in language, norms, and values become a challenge for the working-class student, who must learn the course content while also learning how to be a college student. John's approach to this is to try to connect with the students:

> I use very common language, I don't try to think that I'm more than they are or anything. I reassure them that even though I'm their instructor to a certain extent, I'm working for them. You are my boss, I have an open door policy, and I try to just be overall approachable.

Sharnia

"I wouldn't have it any other way," was how Sharnia approached her position as a community college instructor. As many other participants did, Sharnia compares the research required at the university level, and the maturity of high school students to frame her appreciation and enjoyment of teaching at the community college level. When asked to describe what it is like to teach at a community college, Sharnia identified the diversity of students, with diverse experiences, understandings, and abilities as distinguishing characteristics. These characteristics framed as both positive and frustrating, with a large portion of her time spent trying to find the best teaching methods and styles to accommodate all students. Sharnia had previously worked in data analysis, but upon relocating to another area, had been unable to find a position in that field. She began teaching as an adjunct faculty

member, and like several of the participants, found that she enjoyed it, and thus pursued a full-time position.

Sharnia felt she understood at least in part what it meant to be working-class because of her discipline and previous work as a researcher. Working-class was defined as below middle class and above working poor, and in terms of life experience, was described as “day-by-day struggle managing a fulltime workload, may or may not have health insurance, does not have very much vacation days, and they do not have lots of things…investments or security.” When asked if she could identify when a student was working-class, Sharnia answered that she "can only tell if a student admits to it...can't judge a book by its cover." Certain indicators however could give insight, such as overhearing “I’m having a difficult time balancing work, rent, paying, hungry. ” Sharnia ended her response to this question with “I think all my students are working-class”.

When describing the experiences of being working-class and teaching working-class students, Sharnia talked at length about the constraints students felt with finding balance in their multiple responsibilities of working, being a student, and at times, having a family. This influenced how she saw her role as a teacher, in that she felt responsible for ensuring students didn't lose hope. She stated, "I try to be a motivator more than instructor sometimes, making sure education is worthwhile." At another point in the interview, when asked how she particularly interacts with working-class students, Sharnia says she does act differently with them, that she feels like they can educate her at times, and at other times she becomes a mother to them.

In regards to the benefits of having working-class students, Sharnia is adamant that they are more appreciative of higher education, and as a result work harder than do middle-class students. She also states that they as a group are easier to teach critical thinking in classes, given their different experiences and understandings. Sharnia sees their different cultural backgrounds as assets to the overall learning of the class, and shared a story of how a particular student was able to bring in personal real-world experience with a class project regarding minimum-wage jobs. This project required that students produce a monthly living budget based upon the income of one individual working a full-time minimum wage job. Many of the students were "at a loss" as to how to budget accordingly, and the working-class student was able to use her own experiences to share with the class as to how one "makes it" on a limited income.

When asked about the overall purpose of higher education, Sharnia responded that it was to produce a well-rounded, understanding individual "so you can go into the workforce with knowledge and problem-solving skills." This connection to the economy was perceived to be more evident for the working-class student, "it's to get to a better place financially." The day-to-day experience of higher education for the working-class student was described as struggling to afford textbooks, finding time to get to the library to use the computers, not having personal home computers, not having reliable transportation to campus, and not being able to balance the multiple demands placed upon them. Sharnia commented that she keeps these struggles in mind by providing time in-class to complete assignments, and that she plans her course load and schedule of due dates accordingly. She also tries to use the experience of working-class as part of the teaching, such as the minimum-wage project in

which she "makes everybody walk in the shoes of a working-class individual" with the hope that upper classed students are "humbled" and "become aware of social class issues."

Sharnia also discussed the extent of inequality in larger society as influencing the experience of students to attain higher education. Specifically she noted that access to technology, and the ability balance school and work was tied to class location. She argued that higher education should provide sufficient opportunity for students to succeed, but this first requires that the needs of students be identified and acknowledged. "Each social class, it is what it is, it's not bad or good," but "social class is everything," for example, the ability to write an essay to apply for a scholarship to afford college.

Sharnia deals with inequality by sharing her experiences, and creating a safe and comfortable environment in which students can share their experiences, "I try to give them a safe haven. I listen to them...everybody tells a story. I dissect their life, understand their social position. In my class, I have no inequality." Sharnia states that she tries to make them feel empowered, and gives them more encouragement. She argues that higher education in general should be concerned about social inequality, but "I don't know how to solve it at the larger level, I just know what I can do in the classroom."

Edwin

Edwin comes from a working-class background, and worked a variety of jobs such as painting houses and constructions, before finding his way into academics. While attending a community college as a student, he found a specific discipline that supported his curiosity of human behavior. As a veteran, the GI Bill allowed him to continue his studies, "...because I didn't have any other source of income and no back up as far as an rich relative."

When asked about his experiences and perceptions of working at a community college, and the community college student population, Edwin replied:

> I love the students, they have struggled and they have these stories and lives and are just amazing to me. They have unbelievable challenges. I try to remember their challenges, help them try to understand how to do this (college) and be successful in the higher education business. The sacrifices they've made to get to this point. I mean families, jobs, kids, you know, all kinds of abuse, alcohol and drugs and all that comes into play.

Edwin offered that the challenges experienced by community college students requires that faculty at the community college appreciate these challenges, and find purpose in meeting these challenges, "got to love what you are doing...you are giving people a chance." He articulated that he encounters a diverse student population, who are very anxious, but think they can they are going to give it a try nonetheless.

When asked to define and describe the experiences of working-class students, Edwin first noted cultural differences, "their backgrounds don't give them the language for college...it becomes a struggle for them, they've got it, but they just don't, they don't have the confidence." He went on to describe these students as working, holding a job, raising families, sometimes returning, sometimes coming for the first time, sometimes young, and sometimes older. "The sacrifices they make to get here, its one of the things that keeps me going." In response to these sacrifices and challenges, Edwin states that working-class students attempt to make-up for deficiencies or preparation, and that their motivation is a key factor in this struggle, "they try so hard...you try to touch them, to care for them, to let them

know that you care, and you try to contact them and teach them." Edwin argued that it is the responsibility of the teacher to use this motivation to help students succeed, "it is the teacher who determines whether or not the students get it."

Edwin states that working-class students have jobs, but more importantly, are struggling to make a living and to raise a family. They are the "backbone of what makes this a nation...salt of the earth, the ones that do the work...not the bosses, although a lot of them may own their own business...they've worked all their lives and expect to work." When asked if he could tell if a student is working-class, Edwin first defends his ability to do so, ""this is not a negative thing, okay?" He then notes the ability to read and the language patterns of a student quickly "tell" him if a student is working-class. Having worked "in the trades", Edwin says that his own background as a working-class individual makes it easy for him to see in a student's speech, ability to articulate, to make a point, to discuss, or to debate their class location, "I know what I understand because I've been around and working with and in so many crews and so many, you know, I can tell what working class is."

When asked if he interacts with working-class students differently, Edwin provides two varied responses. At first he states, "I try not to act different ...I can because of my background, I can empathize with them...do I change, do I treat them differently? Not really." However, he then states that he can fall back in a pattern of speech and behavior representative of his working-class background:

> When I get around people in the trades, I can flip right back to when I was working in the trades. The language takes on a whole different level of, of discourse...the banter, the friendly banter of the working class. There's a

> cadence to is, it is distinctive...you're talking the jive, and its the same...it's almost a common thing with working-class people, you can hear it. I slide right back into it...When I'm around academia, then my language will change...

Edwin states that he has to remember that working-class students are working, and that it's a hard life. He uses his own experiences to try to convince students that education is worth the sacrifices they are making to be in college. He frames these discussions in the sense of having to some things, such as paying for college, standing in lines, etc., for the payback of attaining a college degree. He emphasizes the benefits of staying in college, and how doing so will ultimately reward their hard work.

> It's not that they can't do the work, they haven't bought in yet to the idea that this is worth it. They don't trust it...trust is an issue. They haven't developed the skills yet, how to take the tests, how to write the papers, how to be serious, how to read a text, ...before they develop these skills they have to buy into that this is worth it.

When working-class students do engage and become invested in their college education, Edwin argues that they are a benefit to the larger class because of the "real life experience" they bring to the discussions and material. He states that teachers look for ways to apply course material to the real world, but that it may be difficult to do so in a way that relates to the world of the working-class individual. In regards to the working-class student, Edwin states,

> They are used to being at work. You do a job and you do it right and you move on. Sometimes it is very difficult for them to apply these abstract and hypothetical constructs to their lives. One working class student, older came back to college on GI Bill, was doing well, loved it, ...he was trying to understand the material to be able to use it in his everyday life. He was really excited about it, and that made the class exciting.

The next part of the interview explored the purpose of higher education, and the variation of experience for the working-class student. Edwin stated that the motivation of the individual influences the purpose of higher education. Overall, the purpose of higher education is to provide individuals with the ability to solve problems, and be more creative in how to address problems. For some individuals, a curiosity of life and society is associated with attaining higher education, and Edwin notes that this is the "purist motive associated with education."

For working-class students, Edwin argues that higher education is a more pragmatic choice, and more tied to economic needs. Working-class students "buy into the idea that if they get this degree, it will open some doors previously closed. It is going to crack the door. Evolution in terms of becoming more than what they were. It's bettering their position." And if they determine that education is important, they will defer and make further sacrifices to attain that gratification. Like other participants, Edwin notes that higher education is intimidating for working-class students, "Its out of their comfort zone. They've been working, but the job of higher education is different. They don't know the ground rules..."

Edwin was the only participant to touch on the varied perception of higher education by working-class individuals as a result of political or cultural differences.

> Their perception of higher education is limited to talking heads on TV...who argue higher education is lofty and theoretical, and so a working class student sees this as bullshit. They see higher education as pseudo intellectuals, which thinks they have all the answers, and they know everything...it isn't real, it's silly. Why should I do it, why should I pay money, make effort? It is a challenge to convince them otherwise...I don't blame them, because its nothing interesting, its nothing they can relate to...just these babbling heads.

As a result, Edwin attempts to reframe higher education in terms of language and experiences that relate to the working-class individual:

> I try to tell them how to be successful in this higher education business...practice points of view, nuts and bolts...teach them a skill set...how to take notes, attendance, being organized, finding time to study. I understand the problems you are going to face...you have to be flexible, learn the skills, be able to bend, hang with the teacher you're not connect with that you aren't getting anything from. Talk to people, develop a network.

Max

Max noted that in comparison to four-year college students, community college students are more motivated, more persistent, more engaged, and "see the purpose of education." In particular, she noted that a strength of the community college student was their value upon community. Max spoke of students forming groups in class and outside of class,

as a means of learning the material and providing support for one another. She saw this as a positive influence upon the students' ability to learn from one another, and the course material. Max called her student population a "rich range" from which "real life experience" made an impact upon their reading and writing. Described as "very capable" in regards to being able to do the work, Max expressed frustration in her experience that community college students' potential was often limited by work, family, and other struggles. Students' ability to juggle multiple responsibilities sometimes meant that school had to take a lower priority. In response to this understanding, Max asserted that she tried to "reach out" and understand "the rest of their life."

When asked to define "working-class", Max answered "in this economy, hard to define...we're all working class...its a paycheck-to-paycheck life." She elaborated upon this, stating that one who is working-class has the minimum income to meet daily needs, but may still struggle to pay for gas, or bus fare. She differentiated it from other classes in saying it was not an easy life, and that some may live on the fringes of poverty, while others may feel more comfortable than middle-class individuals. In regards to being able to tell if a particular student is working-class class, Max stated that one can't immediately, or perhaps can ever tell if a student is working-class. Indicators might include students revealing personal struggles, such as dealing with increased gas prices. She listens for and acknowledges economic challenges that influence their ability to be successful for school, such as challenges with transportation.

Given the diversity of the community college student population, Max states that she interacts with working-class students the same as should would with any student, "any

student who reveals a struggle of any kind, I work with." She may make a referral to a counselor at the college, but only if the student presents the situation or brings it up as interfering with school, "without a student bringing it up, it's not something I notice...it becomes an issue when I see it interfering with strengths and weaknesses of completing class, for example, falling asleep in class."

Max also spoke of the challenges of teaching working-class students in terms of culture and larger societal barriers. "The wall of...there is so much, no matter how motivated a person is, that he or she can do with societal forces beyond his or her control." When asked for an example, Max identified transportation, specifically related to affordable, accessible transportation for students, such as a reliable car or public bus routes. She also noted that some students are "ill-equipped to deal with the different world of higher education." She described inequality in knowing how to navigate the classroom, "their life and the classroom are two different worlds." Max talked of this navigation as difficult for students, and for faculty, "there is difficulty in creating and understanding communication differences, handling relationships with people who are different from you." Sometimes students are defensive about learning the culture of higher education, and as a result, "we, faculty have to work on understanding our students, acknowledge the differences in our students...can't pretend it's not there." Reflecting upon what this meant for teaching, Max offered that faculty have to help the student be as successful as possible, working around the obstacles they faced. She valued working-class students' persistence in regards to higher education, noting "they really view education as a way out, so, or a way to better their situation." Because of their life experiences, they have a sense of empathy for each other, and "they learn so much

from working together in groups, learning new processes, enjoying their group interaction, and supporting one another."

Max shared a story of a student, a single young mother who was "incredibly conscientious" but sometimes forgot what was due for the course. The student was absent for a short period, and Max heard from another student that the young mother's child was ill and in the hospital. "She came to the next class to tell me, and I said your child comes first, lets be in touch. She caught up and finished the class. The important thing was communication." Max was quick to note that the student "didn't get a free ride or extra benefits...she completed everything that everyone did." At this point, Max acknowledged that she may be more sympathetic to working-class students, with a "back-up set of rules" to document situations that justify "working around the situation." The extent to which this was helpful to working-class students, however, was noted in Max' ability to know when it was required, "it's the silent ones...who are, who worry me most."

In regards to the purpose of higher education, Max argued for a holistic experience: "to help students identify and continue their talents" through a "broad-based education" that includes diverse experiences and subjects. For working-class students, she noted that such an approach is not necessarily understood or valued. "They come in, take needed classes and get that job...they miss a threshold for lifelong learning." She acknowledged that students are frustrated by broad-based education and general education requirements because

> They are so intent on, financially, how can I for the minimum expense, get certified in some way, um, get documented in some way for a particular job? They say, I don't want all that other stuff.

Max states that this lack of understanding of education as more than a means to a job creates anxiety and discomfort for students. It is a struggle to help them see the relevance of higher education and how it connects to something larger than the immediate future:

> You try to tie in things, abilities you want to see developed, that can be applied in all sorts of settings, life experiences...but if they can connect either with me or someone, or some other people in the class, to reinforce that this is a good experience…

Lestat

Like others, teaching at the community college level was a second career choice for Lestat, and one that he found highly satisfying. He stated that community colleges are a better financial option "for students who are own their own and don't have much parental support" and is an excellent asset because faculty can personally connect with the students. The emphasis upon relationships with students is evident:

> I get to know my students on a personal basis, have good discussions, able to talk with them about career choices and options...I still remember people, get emails from students from years ago...its a wonderful place, and I get to teach.

Having taught previously at the four-year college level, Lestat preferred the community college because the "focus is teaching, not research...we get to be teachers here." For Lestat, this meant faculty could "really offer as much as possible to the willing and interested and motivated student."

When asked to describe the community college student population, Lestat stated that there were three broad categories of community college students: older students trying to

enter the workforce or being retrained for the workforce, younger more traditional students who are highly motivated and requires the financial accessibility and smaller setting in order to succeed, and then the student "who is just here to say I'm here." A working-class student was defined as anyone who holds a job and is responsible for their own support, a "normal person...most people have to have jobs when they go to school...I did." In regards to this understanding of job responsibilities, Lestat offers his students a detailed syllabus and course schedule, and "I ask them to see me if their work responsibilities conflict with those dates...I tell them we can make all kinds of arrangements, I know they have jobs."

Given his definition of working-class, and his understanding that students may have jobs, Lestat denies an ability to tell if a particular student is working-class, "can't tell if they are working-class, don't even try...simply assume everyone has outside responsibilities." To Lestat, students must also recognize that school is an additional responsibility, "they need to come to me ahead of time for requests, and if that shows me you are responsible, I will be accommodating." Work responsibilities also account for the challenges in having working-class students, as Lestat notes that time management is an issue in these students' ability to be successful. "They bite off more than they can chew." On the other hand, Lestat acknowledges that working-class students appear to appreciate school and are more motivated because "they know the costs and effort it takes to be here." In his stories of interaction with working-class students, Lestat refers to back to his detailed course materials as providing the framework for his behavior,

> I had an older student, working, came early and based on syllabus, said I can't do something...we made arrangements to get extensions and materials, and

another, who was always tardy because of work, and I granted him extensions on exams.

When asked specifically if he treated working-class students differently, Lestat stated, "I would certainly hope not...I don't really ask and I don't know unless they bring it up to me, I would hope I treat all of them the same."

The purpose of higher education, according to Lestat, is to provide specialized training for a particular job and learning time management. He did not see that this would vary for the working-class student. However the experience of higher education for the working-class was different in that "they could identify more with the job that they have and school is something they're just kind of doing." Lestat also offered that working-class students may see other students as spoiled and not having to work as hard, and as a result, may be resentful. In regards to how his role as an instructor could influence this experience, Lestat replied, "You can really touch a student, and turn on a light and show them opportunity."

Higher education was noted as being linked to larger social inequality, and for Lestat, this meant different levels of expectations among different groups of people. For some, higher education was never a question, while for others it was not emphasized and there was little to no family support for it. He acknowledged that many students carry

A lot of baggage that I'm simply not aware of and I have no concept of. Some know about how to apply to school, get letters of recommendation, because their parents went to college...others don't know, and I have to remember that.

For Lestat, this becomes a "double-edged sword...I should be aware of their baggage, but not allow this to alleviate them from doing the work." Upon reflection of what this means for his role and influence upon the student, Lestat stated

> I have no experience there. I'm completely out of my depth to that. The same way when they look at me, they don't even know how to approach me or how to relate, and sometimes we can it off but sometimes not. My willingness to work with someone should be slightly increased because they may be having greater difficulties than somebody.

Lestat discussed the concept of working-class in terms of occupation, education, and cultural values. Given some of his family background, he argued that "you don't need to be educated to do well, if you enjoy being a mechanic or if you enjoy cutting grass for a living, good for you." However, he considered it a "social ill" in how others may perceive working-class, "It's a major problem... that you are looked down on. You are not working to your potential. You are somehow less than others because you don't want to go to college." He noted that this could have negative results for one's self-esteem. Lestat shared that his grandparents did well without a college, "back when you could get a good blue-collar job." His grandfather "was respected", but "nowadays, you want to be a factory worker?...What's wrong with you? Don't you have any ambition?"

Lestat linked this change in perception to changes in the economy, and further spoke of how it related to the experience of higher education for a working-class individual,

> People rise to what is expected of them...world of academics different from what is expected of labor. Now there is no viable option, they have to come

> here even if they may not want to, and even if they are not prepared for it. Focus of education is getting a job...they have no idea of what it is to get the education to get a job...they want a good job, but some of the careers that are available require things that they are not prepared for...As an individual, I can talk with the student...about this background, but as a collective, I don't know...

He argued that the current economic structure lacks viable options for people to be successful, given the changes in the economy and the types of jobs available. "So they come here because they don't want to not be successful. They don't want to be bums." Relating this back to his role of teaching, Lestat stated,

> My parents were both college educated, by my grandparents weren't...it was never a question that I would go to college. So it is hard for me to walk a mile in someone else's shoes, when it comes to different expectations and experiences...

Maynard

Maynard entered academia because his "own love for the opportunity that education can bring" was initiated by the teaching method of a particular teacher in high school. Allowed to read about and encouraged to consider subjects he in which he was interested, as they related to specific course content, changed how he thought about education, and influenced his approach to education. He described the classroom as a "blank canvas" and argued that a good teacher "allows the student to just go with it." Maynard explained his love and passion for teaching, "...when I walk into that classroom, I light up, and then they light

up, and that's what its all about!" He described teaching at the community college in reference to the ability to change students' lives, "...for me to just like give them different perspectives and for them to respect other peoples' viewpoints." In comparison to other student populations, he stated that community college students are "working hard, paying for college, have families, have jobs...so I respect them for that."

Maynard's enjoyment of teaching is in his ability to "touch a student's life" in that "a lot of them have not been exposed to any of this stuff, so to just expose them to it and to see them light up, they're like, wow!" He describes his experience in teaching as "being aware" of the classroom, the energy, the feelings, and the potential to inspire students to take charge of their learning. He describes students as "hungry...they want something, a new perspective...they don't take my classes for job skills." Maynard relates this to their life experiences, "they don't want to be here, they want to be over there. They've been over here their whole lives but, you know, education, their parents or society has not let them see that."

When asked to define "working-class", Maynard offered that it refers to those "trying to make it in life and working, doing their best to survive, to provide for families, trying to find something they love to do, that they can make a career out of..." When asked if he could tell if a specific student was working-class, he replied that he could not, but that perhaps he could or has made that assumption. In part, he argued that to do so would be inappropriate because he seeks to treat everyone the same, and to see all students, as "human beings with that passion, and drives, just like myself." Maynard related this to other classifications, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, stating that he sought to "try to see through all that stuff" and see "the humanity of just people."

Maynard articulated the challenges of working-class students in relation to their responsibilities outside of school. He noted that work schedules may cause working-class students to come to class late, or tired. He relates this back to the awareness he stated is necessary for faculty, "...maybe they are sleeping (in class) because they just got off work, and it isn't reflective of your teaching." Maynard offers the following story to illustrate:

> I had a student came in late every day, for the last five minutes. I could have kicked him out, but decided that if he showed up for those five minutes, those were five minutes he could learn from...came to find out he was juggling multiple jobs, family situations, etc....I saw him as noble.

He stated that the major benefit of working-class students was their motivation for being in school, "they want it...it's the hunger again." He argued that for his specific courses, it was not motivation based on employment, "...not that they want the skills, the job, the paycheck...(they) want a new way of being in the world."

Maynard's perspective of working-class students aligned with his response as to the purpose of higher education, which is to "give students a different world, see meaning, and connect their lives with their purpose. Education should inspire students to create better worlds for themselves and other people through what they learn through school." He acknowledged that this could vary significantly for the working-class student because;

> (They) don't know, haven't encountered a class or instructor like me. They think they need a piece of paper because I can't get a job without this...(education) is a means to an end, and the end so for me (is) to get a

paycheck so I can support my family and get on with life...versus a deeper sense of meaning.

For others, college may be required because of parental expectations or peer pressure. He notes too, that for some, it is a "matter of survival", but that "a few understand its about passion and learning." He states that for all, "I try to teach them it's not about the paper."

Molona

Molona introduced herself in terms of having been a community college student at one point, and noted that teaching at the community college level was a second career, following some time teaching in high school. She called the community college system an "alternate resource...financially, but I also look at it as a great springboard, especially for those not sure what they want to do." Molona identified her primary responsibility as being the student, or learner, in her class. She stated that much of her time is spent "figuring out hat kind of learners I have, adjusting things if necessary." This focus on the student is possible at the community college level because "community colleges are more personal."

Molona described the community college population as having diverse needs, as "individuals" who require personal attention in order to succeed. "The setting is so personal that you...you really have to be engaged. If you're not engaged, you're not effective." Students "have challenges" and classes have to change "to meet the diversity of students and their needs."

Molona replied that she was unsure how to define "working-class" and offered the following;

> Socioeconomically I would look at what is working to middle class? Students who are working, who hold up some kind of other job to try to support themselves, than just the student job. I don't really even know how to define that in a classroom setting...There are students who don't depend on financial aid and don't have to work, there are students who get financial aid and don't hold a job, and then there's the student in the classroom that may or may not have financial aid but depends on working as well as being a student in the classroom...and so.. for me, that's working class.

When asked if she could identify that a particular student was working-class, Molona argued that she "can't presume to know," which is "good in that a bias is not being made, but can be bad because there's an assumption that the students may be equal and they are not." She tries to treat everyone the same, and hopes for equity in the classroom, but noted that

> You learn about the individual, and as they allow you to know what is going on (in their life), you begin to adjust your expectations...(you) adjust your pedagogy...and there is bias in that.

She admits to feeling sympathy for working-class students because their time and energy is divided between various responsibilities, "(they) don't have luxury of being a fulltime student." Molona identified that a particular challenge for working-class students is the type of jobs they have, "these students are at the mercy of their jobs and may not have set schedules." This, along with childcare issues, can make it difficult for students to be successful. Molona expects students to inform her of such issues, and "we will work around it." She shared a story of a single mom, working full-time and going to school part-time, who

lost her job and apartment. The student didn't inform Molona until weeks afterwards. Molona continued;

> I tried to contact her. She overcame what society was the shame of being unemployed and homeless, and was able to talk to me...there's an opportunity here to really help people, but you have do know they need help...there is only so much instructors can do.

Molona at this point admitted to acting differently with working-class students, saying she was willing to work with them, but "if there's no evidence that they're not doing okay, or they don't come to me, I don't change the way I treat them, but, um, I don't know..."

When asked about the purpose of higher education, and how that experience may vary for working-class students, Molona replied that it is "a stepping stone to a goal." The goal was defined as one's "call in life" and she contrasted this to the preconceived idea of transformation, "I don't think it's to make better citizens." For working-class students, Molona stated that because of external factors and pressures, they "don't have the time to explore...they need a path." She added that working-class students "see school as more of a stepping stone to a better paycheck, not necessarily to a calling in life...they just need to finish." She added that "this is okay, school can mean different things to different people." Molona offered that for some working-class students, higher education could be "freeing" and allow "explorations," while for others, it can be "grueling."

As an instructor, Molona stated that she influenced this experience by embracing and encouraging her students. She offered the following advice;

> Get them to open up, meet them on a personal level, encourage them...empower them. You can reach these students...let them know there is more to the classroom than somebody standing up and barking at them.

Molona saw inequality in the classroom, and argued social inequality has always existed "because we are not born with the same sets of talents or gifts or environments." In reflecting upon her experiences and responsibilities as an instructor, Molona stated:

> If I were to force equality in a classroom on some level, I would actually be stripping away opportunity of some people to achieve or others to fail...You can address it case-by-case, but I think to try to rectify that in any broad spectrum is going to force...actually its going to restrict freedom.

Molona argued, "the problem is convincing those caught in cycles of inequality that there are resources and avenues to change their life." Part of this comes from the perception working-class students have of themselves as "not worthy," because of what they see around them. Without self-confidence and motivation to change, individuals are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to change, "being surrounded by others who are unlike you may make you doubt yourself and ability." She related this to her personal experience of having a lower social class standing while in school;

> You know the world of those who have more money...That can create awkward situation...I felt weird in going to a school where the other students were of a higher social class, and I felt like I had to prove I was smart...you need that support system in college, and it was difficult to fit in.

In regards to the experience of working-class students at the college, Molona offered:

"I do think working-class students see themselves as different from students who don't have to work...I think they see them goofing off or just getting by." She stated that, similar to her own experiences, working-class students feel pressure to perform and show their competency, and "if they are not prepared, they're embarrassed and say to me, gosh I had to work a second shift..."

Molona sees working-class students "finding each other", and identifying over common issues and struggles. This support becomes vital to their motivation to stay in school. Molona attempts to acknowledge the struggles students may face; "I make sure they understand that I don't give them a grade, that they earn their grades. I know that I use language that speaks to certain individuals that already understand a work ethic." Molona describes "a work ethic" in terms of doing the work required to gain the reward, with the reward reflecting the effort put into the work. As a result, Molona believes she sees fewer working-class students negotiating for a grade change because "they tend to actually make the effort to do something about it (grade)."

Overall, Molona felt that community colleges were more sensitive to struggles and realities faced by working-class students. Additionally, she argued that within the community college classroom, inequality and other issues could be more easily translated into understanding and change;

> Take the theory, and ask our students to reflect on that theory, and then openly discuss the realities of their situations. I think students opening with personal, practical examples can help other students learn much better than us trying to dictate lofty ideology...when a working-class student is seen as individual and

not as a shadow then their value for what they can bring to the classroom and what they can bring to the learning environment is recognized.

Bud

Bud came to teaching at the community college after having taught at another community college and at the local four-year university. When asked what it was like to teach at a community college, he responded, "I like it...with the classes I teach, after teaching at the university, I have a wider, uh variety of students." He proceeded to explain that this variety of students allowed him the opportunity to try different methods of and approaches to teaching. Specifically he noted that students at the four-year college came from similar backgrounds, sharing the same social class and same aspirations. Community college students varied in terms of age, college preparedness, motivations, and experiences, which pushed him to consider and try different ways of approaching his discipline. "Community college students make it interesting." When asked to describe in more detail the community college student population, Bud replied:

> There is a wide swarth of students...little bit all over the place. Some literally do nothing, others are on top of things. In the middle, there is the huge swarth...the median answer...not the best students for being timely and having the background to learn without the answers begin given to them.

In regards to being able to tell how to identify a working class student, Bud initially had difficulty in expressing his perceptions:

> Well...just on the first contact type thing, without getting to know them, uh, they, working class...uh, I, damn, how can you tell? I've been wrong before. If

> it's not the clothes, its the manner, and uh, um, I'm trying to discern what that manner is---Articulation, for one thing, the language, words they choose to use, wow, just something they all fall into...man, that is a damn good question...

Language and articulation were key indicators for Bud in how he could perceive a working class status, and he noted as well that the difference in language negatively affected his ability to connect with students. He expressed that it wasn't only that he could see a difference in the communication patterns, but too, the students perceived a difference in his communication patterns, which resulted in more formal relationships. "I think they like me, but they aren't going to invite for to join them for a beer after class." Bud stated that he felt that he and his working-class students often misinterpreted one another, and as a result of miscommunication, his ability teach the subject was adversely impacted, "that's the tricky thing about teaching...yeah, a lot of language I take for granted doesn't communicate to them, the common language for me isn't for them."

The challenges of having working-class students were explained in terms of the language/communication barriers, and additionally as it related to different life experiences. Although Bud identified as coming from a working-class background, and to an extent, still identified as such, he felt his own classed journey had separated him from his working-class students.

> There is a roadblock, trying to impart something to them...what they expect to learn and what I expect them to learn, two different things...my subject is completely foreign to them, I know, something they've never experienced,

never will again after leaving my class, it's not a part of their lives...but they are here, they come to my class, to learn about it. A whole different life perspective can be an obstacle to overcome.

In describing the benefits of working-class students, Bud stated that he "loved that they are working-class", because they chose to take a class that in his words, "couldn't be less pragmatic" and this gave him the opportunity to expose them to new understanding and material. He noted that if the language barriers could be overcome, and if students could be made to feel comfortable with him, that students became excited about the material. To Bud, this opportunity to expand the world and understanding of the working-class student by exposing them to new ways of thinking, and allowing them to connect to their own lives, was a rewarding aspect of teaching at the community college level.

Bud shared a story of a particular encounter with a working-class student that illustrated his concern with his ability to connect with students. A student "found him" and asked for his opinion regarding some creative work she had completed, and hoped to sell by renting a booth at a flea market. Given Bud's professional experience, he recognized the limited possibility for the student, but sought to provide the student with both encouragement and sound advice. As he spoke with the student, he said he realized that the student "was not hearing what she wanted to hear." Bud also stated that the student seemed to have a difficult time articulating to him exactly what she hoped to do, and what she had done in regards to her work. She did mentioned that her family was not supportive in her endeavors, and Bud took this to mean she was looking for encouragement as well as feedback. After the

encounter, Bud stated that he felt badly for the student, and worried that he had not been helpful, "I try, I do try to find common ground...doesn't always work."

The theme of working-class extended into Bud's view of higher education. When asked to describe the purpose of higher education, he stated, "to be higher working-class (laughs)." In explaining this, Bud argued that higher education has become a means to employment, that in his mind, was rote and void of creativity. He did not see that higher education varied for a working-class student; rather, all students sought out higher education as a way to learn a skill, get a job, and make more money. He did not think it necessarily changed their life opportunities, life styles, or aspirations. For the working-class student, Bud stated

> They know they are working-class, and at the community college, what it offers them is, uh, a better home and better position, but it's a different skill set for a different type of labor. A step up, but, yeah, they have limited dreams, but I'm happy they have dreams.

When asked how working-class students experience higher education, Bud stated that he thought they were initially intimidated and "unfamiliar with the expectations placed upon them." He explained that perhaps some of the unfamiliarity came from students' experiences with the workplace, "its different from their job, go in and do something, go home, you are done." Once students become accustomed to college, Bud said he felt that students were excited about being there, and that it was "a big deal for them, feel a little better about themselves, for just being there." He did not feel that their experience with higher education necessarily changed anything in regards to social inequality. He felt that their lack of

previous exposure to opportunities and understanding continued to limit their options, although he did articulate that the critical thinking he encouraged in his classes might make them less complacent about their situations.

Study Findings

The interview process directed each participant to respond to specific questions regarding the community college student population, participants' identification of and interaction with working-class students, and the role or purpose of higher education in general and in particular for the working-class. This section identifies common themes in regards to these responses, as initially noted within the transcripts, and later, as coded chunks pertaining to the significance of providing answers to this study's questions.

Common Themes and Responses

Perception of Student Population: Diverse, Struggling, Unprepared, Motivated

When asked to describe the population of community college students, a majority of the participants responded that the students were diverse, and noted that this diversity applied to age, motivation, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic ability. This sense of diversity was framed within an appreciation of faculty members' role in the students' education and the distinct mission of a community college to meet a diverse student population.

> The diversity in the classroom is unlike any other educational experience that you will have; anybody who is 70, 82, and fresh out of high school. And I think at our institution, even from campus to campus, there is a different bit of diversity so that influences that experience. It is a very well rounded ... you

> have ... it's everybody. That open door, we say "come on." It doesn't matter what you have or what you don't have, or what resources you have or what resources you don't have, or what your past is, or what your future is. Come on, we'll help you, which I think lends to ... as I joke in my household of doing the greater good, paying it forward, and helping push people forward in their life. (*Juanita)*

This diversity was mostly acknowledged in positive terms, "We always say that the magic is in the moment, in the classroom, because you'll have a 57-year old fellow who's driven a truck all his life, from a rural community next to, um, a 17-year old woman, um who grew up in inner city Charlotte," (*Max*). However, respondents also noted that this diversity, especially in regards to academic preparation for college, as well as work and family responsibilities, could be frustrating,

> It's so challenging to meet everybody, where they need to be, but you have to. It so challenging to have a policy. 'The quiz is due today'. 'My internet went down.' 'The kids were all sick and I had to work late.' I hate those emails. I hate having to make those decisions, but you have to make those decisions, (*Joe*).

A majority of participants expressed an appreciation for the struggles experienced by and sacrifices made by community college students. Struggles were articulated in terms of having to juggle multiple roles and responsibilities related to family, work, and education. Faculty noted that in order to fulfill these multiple roles, students subsequently made sacrifices in other parts of their lives in order to go to college. Additionally, faculty

articulated that in extreme instances they were aware that students were at times battling issues of substance abuse, homelessness, and daily economic uncertainty:

> For some of them, they have so many capabilities, but things get in the way. Um, the number of hours they works, family struggles or situations, sometimes addictions or, um, ju-, having to go to court. (*Max*)
>
> These people have struggled, and have struggled and they have these stories and lives that are just amazing to me. And they tell me things, and they come to me and they sit and talk about these unbelievable challenges that they've had to go through to get to this point. (*Edwin*)

Frustration with the students was often linked to perceived inadequate preparation for college, inadequate understanding of college, and lack of resources required to be successful.

> Their focus is the job. They have no concept of what it is to go to get the education to get the job...They want a good job. They love a successful career, but some of the careers that are available require things that they're not prepared (for). I don't want to say capable but not prepared to do. (*Lestat*)
>
> (They are) not the best students for being timely and having the background to learn without the answers being given to them. (*Bud*)
>
> It's probably more one extreme than the other, but I've had students who I don't know how they got out of high school. I don't know what they're doing here. (*Joe*)

Conversely, most of the faculty participants noted an appreciation of students attempting college, given these struggles, particularly as it reflected motivation and desire for education.

> The motivation just seems so much higher, and uh, and students seem so persistent and engaged, and see the purpose. (*Molona*)
>
> (Community college) may be their last chance. It may be that they're sleeping in a homeless shelter or they're struggling or in a recovery program and trying to figure out how to get their life in a not better, but in a different place than it's ever been before. (*Juanita*)
>
> ...they're here with a purpose in mind. They want to better themselves and they need a starting point that's affordable to them or can get them to that quick career track. (*John*)
>
> They're hungry. They're hungry. But they want something. They want something. In my classes, they want a new perspective, they want a different way of looking at life and that's why I love doing what I do. (*Maynard*)

Defining Working-Class: Hesitancy, Jobs, Responsibilities, Struggles, but Not Culture

Participants were asked several direct questions regarding working-class students. The first asked how each defines working-class. Most respondents initially expressed hesitancy or confusion as to how they would define working-class;

> Well, I'm not real sure (laughs) because working class, socioeconomically, I would look at what is working to middle class, if you wanna talk that way. (*Molona*)

> Working class, um, ah, that's so hard to define, in this economy especially. We're all working class (laughs)... (*Max*)
>
> I guess I would define a working class student as a student whose parents are at a socioeconomic level that...I don't know what the number is, if I had to put a number on it...I really would define it socioeconomically. How much are your parents making? (*Joe*)

After expressing unease with defining working-class, respondents continued their responses, sometimes after a moment of silence, to include aspects of careers/jobs, responsibilities, and struggles. First and foremost, respondents claimed that working-class denoted whether or not one was working, and as it applied to college, whether or not they were working while attending school. Others included that this work was mandatory to support one's self and/or family. Types of jobs that identified working-class included service and trade jobs, such as driving a bus, cutting hair, and doing construction. Struggles were identified in terms of the ability to pay bills, acquire and maintain transportation, meeting daily needs, and juggling multiple responsibilities. Similar to the articulated understanding of the general community college student population experiences with challenges, faculty often referred to the struggles of what it means to be working class.

> So working class would probably mean day-by-day struggle managing a fulltime workload, may or may not have health insurance, does not have very much vacation days, and they do not have lots of things...(*Sharnia*)
>
> Working class i-is, is a, I, I guess my intuitive reaction is sort of a paycheck-to-paycheck life, where...a person, um, is minimally receiving enough income,

or support, to meet daily needs, and therefore has to be very aware of, of sustenance, of, of how to pay the basic bills...there's no luxury income... (*Max*)

We were talking (in class) about financial aid, and we were talking about the difference between a job and a career, and what resources they have here, and she goes, 'I'm just over broke.' That sense of 'I've got enough, I can scrape. But I don't have enough to do what I might want to do.' That idea of just, 'I can make ends meet, I'm not super rich, I'm not...I have enough resources that I can be in school because that says something by itself. (*Juanita*)

They are struggling to make a living, they're struggling to raise a family. They struggling, and it's a very big struggle and a very big sacrifice to come to school. (*Edwin*)

Things as simple as, do I have gas or transportation to get to campus? Even if they can get to campus, if it's that economic situation where they haven't eaten, they're hungry, don't have food or maybe even were bouncing around from place to place. (*John*)

...students who are trying to make it in life, working, oftentimes, multiple jobs to try and make ends meet...doing their best to survive to provide for their families...and its for survival. (*Maynard*)

The most common description of these struggles for the working-class framed the issue as one related to inadequate income related to employment, or inadequate resources to pursue education as well as support a family. Working-class, as a culture with specific

norms, values, and language was largely absent in faculty definitions of working-class. Within the definition of working-class, only two faculty participants specifically identified an understanding of class as reflective of cultural components, and did so by emphasizing those as positive attributes. Edwin included the following in his description of the working class, "I would say they, they are the backbone of, of what makes this, what makes this nation. They're the, they're the salt of the earth, they're the ones doing the work." Like Edwin, John had identified as having a working-class background, and pulled from his personal experience to define the term,

> I will look at it as positive. Like I said, I actually relate to them. I am a first-generation college student in my family, and without my parents working, I wouldn't have got to the point where I'm at. I see it as an opportunity that even though my parents didn't go to college, that I'm not shy to say, neither one of my parents were even a high school graduate. But the hard work that they put in, they made it easier for me to have those opportunities. I have very high respect for the working class and if I had to make the choice, I will say, working class is probably the most honest and sincere people I know.

Seeing the Working-Class Student: Can't, Won't, Will

The next question in the interview directly asked participants how they could tell if a student is working-class. The majority of participants, 9 out of 10, initially responded that they could not identify whether or not a student was working-class.

> I, you can't immediately, or ever, you know. (*Max*)

> Well...just on the first contact type thing, without getting to know them, uh, they, working class...uh, I, damn, how can you tell? I've been wrong before. (Bud)
>
> How can I tell? That's a good one. (laughs). I guess there's no...I guess, I just can't really...(*Maynard*)
>
> I can't. I don't even try. (*Lestat*)

Several indicated that only if a student shared that information would they be able to identify a student's social class. "You can't, unless they tell you, um, or at least, I don't..I don't presume to know," (*Molona*). Others suggested that to consider a student's social class was inappropriate, and amounted to a form of prejudice:

> Not always, but sometimes you can...because I try not to assume anything about anyone. (*Joe*)
>
> I would like to think that before I make a prejudgment I ask questions that I think...some of those things might come up. (*Juanita*)
>
> You can't really judge a book by its cover. (*Sharnia*)

A few indicated that the struggles of the general population aligned with that of a working-class student, and consequently the viewing or acknowledgement of a working-class status was unnecessary.

> When a student reveals, to me, a particular struggle, whatever kind of struggle it is, whether it is an economic struggle...or, a learning disability struggle, or, whatever it might be, you know, there's certainly a degree of empathy or sympathy. (*Max*)

I guess I would, yeah, my assumption would be that most of them would be. I don't know if that's faculty or not but that's...would kind of be my assumption. (*Maynard*).

I simply make the assumption that everyone has outside responsibilities. (*Lestat*)

I think that all of my students are working class. (*Sharnia*)

Two participants, John and Edwin, more easily responded to the question of how to tell if a student is working-class, and each initially framed their response in a manner to make clear that they were not being judgmental in their responses. They also emphasized that the class markers they used in their ability to tell if a student was working-class were not inherently negative attributes.

Now this is not, I want this, I want you to know this, this is not meant in any perj-or, there's no, it's not a negative thing, okay? But quite frankly, a lot of times like many things of this kind of thing, class, being able to read it, quite frankly it's the language...you can tell in the speech, you can tell by the ability to articulate, the ability to make your point, to discuss, to debate, okay? (*Edwin*)

Sometimes, unintentionally they may mention their past careers or what they do or even if they don't mention careers...Another thing is not to judge a book by their cover, but sometimes they way that they're dressed. I see someone come in with a red shirt and khaki's, I know they may be going to McDonalds...or somewhere, which is, nothing wrong with those, but that's

> what they just...it's sometimes I guess their dress or just talking to them in general, the way they describe their life experience. (*John*)

The remaining participants did eventually identify class markers for a working-class status, including the language and dress of an individual. Language was identified in terms of what students spoke of in regards to life experiences, their ability to articulate an understanding of material, their ease with and ability to ask questions, their level of vocabulary, and their ability to debate or argue a point. Specifically, the inability to communicate, at a "normal" level, became the means by which a student was perceived to be working-class. A few participants explained this inadequacy as it reflected a contradiction between a working-class background and the expectations of college.

> We have our own language in higher education which is not constant with others things in our culture. So when we ask people about, "Hey, have you taken the prerequisite for that?" They have no idea what that word even means. They'll nod and shake their head because they don't want to appear stupid or that they don't know. They'll walk away from a conversation not understanding what happened because they don't have the context to actually get it. (*Juanita*)

> I always tell my students, there's two reasons you use bad grammar-either you don't know or you don't care. Working class...it's probably more they don't know, whereas more at middle class, they probably know, but they are just not checking their work. (*Joe*)

Having a Working-Class Student: Benefits, Challenges, and Accommodations

The next three questions of the interview guide asked participants to share the benefits and challenges of having a working-class student, and then how they interacted with working-class students. The overwhelming majority of responses regarding the benefits of working-class students centered on the perceived motivation of working-class students to attend college. Participants responded that working-class students are more motivated than students from upper social class backgrounds, and subsequently appreciated more the college experience. A majority of participants also spoke of how a working-class background allowed for more insight and connections in the classroom, between students and the course material. While faculty were less likely to identify variations in life experience in their ability to define working-class or tell if a student was working class, a majority indicated that the life experience of working-class students added to the learning of the material.

> They also bring in more life experiences, I think., um, when we have discussions about relevant topics in the class sometimes they add another dimension that students maybe who are, um, fresh out of high school and coming to college and not having to worry about where the money's coming from and their expenses are paid, um then the perceptions they would have about certain circumstances or situation. Not always but I do see a difference like that. (*Molona*)

Additionally, a common theme connected the perceived life experience of working-class to specific behaviors and expectations of working-class students. Several faculty remarked that the "work ethic" of the working-class student was a positive attribute, and one

that perhaps helped students persevere through the course. "A solid work ethic. If they are able to figure it out, they are the hardest workers and they will put their nose to the grindstone and work like no other," (*Juanita*). This idea of a "work ethic" was also tied to the financial status of working-class students, with a few participants claiming that because working-class students by definition are working, and working low-paying or difficult jobs, consider education as an investment. Consequently, the time and effort one puts into the course work aligns with the financial sacrifices already made to be in the class. "It's a hard life and they work hard for their money, and it's usually not that much money, and they are serious about this..." (*Edwin*). Many participants also noted that the motivation, desire, and struggles of their students enhanced their own sense of purpose for being an instructor at the community college level.

> It is good and honorable work and on the days when I'm tired and I've been up and I'm frustrated it never ceases to amaze me because there is always that interaction with the student where you realize what you do is not trivial. (*Juanita*)

In regards to the challenges of having working-class students, all the participants to some extent discussed how the financial challenges of working-class status presented academic challenges. Faculty identified these challenges as the negotiation working-class students make in regards to competing demands. "The working-class students are struggling for D's and C's, because they're working at a full-time job, they're probably taking care of family members, if not their own children. Juggling all this while going to school...," (*Sharnia*). Others noted these challenges as they specifically related to employment. "How

do you plan for your...as a student how do you plan for your next week when you found out your schedule on Friday, what you're gonna have for the next week, and it's just all kinds of things," (*Molona*). Likewise, many spoke of the caregiving duties they associated with working-class. "Sleep because of the work schedule or the, the awesome level of responsibilities with parenting younger siblings, or having many children and not enough support to take care of the children...," (*Max*).

In regards to these struggles perceived to have been experienced by working-class students, faculty noted that the challenge then of having them as a student was "how to help that student be as successful as possible, working around obstacles," (*Max*). Several noted that as an instructor, they tried to keep an open mind about what their students are experiencing and being flexible regarding students' ability to complete coursework. Connecting back to the previous finding that faculty felt they could only tell if a student is working-class if she/he divulges that information, faculty also discussed their concern of not knowing when a student was experiencing problems. "Its the silent ones I...I worry about," (*Max*). "There's an opportunity here to really help people but you have to know that they need that help," (*Molona*).

This leads to a significant finding of faculty's perception of working-class students. They do not want to prejudge if a student is working-class, and assume that knowledge about social class status will or can only occur as they come to know or talk with a student. Yet a large number of participants expressed concern that they could not connect with working-class students, and that working-class students would not trust them to share their status or struggles.

That's the tricky thing about teaching...yeah, a lot of language I take for granted doesn't communicate to them, the common language for me isn't for them. (*Bud*)

It's complete culture shock. They look at their instructors and I have some classes where I don't look like any of my other students. What does that then say for them? Can they even identify with their instructor in the classroom? (*Juanita*)

I look at people and I say to myself, "Why can't you do it? Why don't you do it yourself?" Then sometimes I really have to remember that it is not simply that. There is a lot of baggage that I'm just simply not aware of and I have no concept of....I have no experience there. I'm completely out of my depth to that. The same way when they look at me, they don't even know how to approach me or how to relate, and sometimes we hit it off but sometimes not. (*Lestat*)

Connection, or lack of, was also mentioned as it related to the influence of classed life experiences upon working-class students' ability to understand or benefit from the course material.

There is a roadblock, trying to impart something to them...what they expect to learn and what I expect them to learn, two different things...my subject is completely foreign to them, I know, something they've never encountered, never will again after leaving my class, it's not part of, of their lives. But they

are here, they, they come to my class, to learn about it. A whole different life perspective can be an obstacle to overcome. (*Bud*)

It's not a matter of intelligence. I don't think working class students are dumber. I don't think that at all. I just think they are not coming from a similar background. (*Joe*)

A final finding related to the perceived challenges of having working-class students circles back to ideas of motivation and struggles. A reoccurring challenge identified by faculty was the perception that they needed to convince students that college education was worthwhile. This was framed in terms of helping working-class students learn the culture of higher education (language, norms, and values) at the same time that students were given encouragement to stay invested in the process. "If they don't have context for higher education I think it is a struggle, because not only are they learning the content in the classroom but then they're learning the system of what higher education is, " (*Juanita*). "It's a balance of, and not losing hope that you can do this, making sure that an education is worthwhile and that you need to keep going and keep trekking in order to raise your social class," (*Sharnia*).

The third question in this section asked about faculty interactions with working-class students. Similar to the question regarding how to tell if a student is working-class, the majority of faculty were inclined to initially respond that they did not treat working-class students differently from other students. "I would certainly hope not. I, I...That's what I can say, um, since I don't really ask everybody and I don't know unless they bring it up to me, I would hope I treat all of them the same," (*Lestat*). Several clarified in their response that they

strove to provide the same standards to all students, regardless of categories. "...Meeting the needs of a working class student is just one of the needs that you have to be aware of as a teacher. You have to meet the needs of DNS students. You have to meet the needs of the hearing-impaired students. You have to meet the needs of shy students, the foreign students," (*Joe*).

From an initial claim that working-class students were not seen or treated differently, participants then countered that in fact they did make certain accommodations or acted differently to or for working-class students. These articulated accommodations included extensions on coursework and working around work schedules. All of the accommodations depended upon the faculty knowing about issues and problems faced by students, and most relayed that they could not provide such accommodations unless the student first approached them about problems.

> When a student walks in the classroom, um, my effort is to treat everyone the same, equity in the classroom, but as the semester goes on and you learn the individual and they allow you to know more of what's going on with their life, then you begin to adjust your expectations. You begin to adjust your perceptions and then there's a bias that comes in. So at the start of the classroom I have an equitable classroom in that I expect the same from all my students but by the end of the classroom that may have been far adjusted just by circumstances or by information. (*Molona*)

A majority of the participants also articulated clearly that such accommodations did not translate into lower expectations nor less rigorous coursework. When sharing one story about

working with a working-class student, Max noted, "It's not that she had a free ride or got extra benefits. She still completed everything everybody else did, um, but we worked around different ways she could share a draft, or, you know, whatever."

Several participants, who had previously identified as having a working-class background, spoke of their ability to empathize with or modify behavior accordingly, when interacting with working-class students. John stated, "(I act) Differently, but not in a bad way. Sometimes I would be more specific if I've got the working class students as far as giving what details and what my expectations are." Empathy/sympathy for working-class student struggles were evident in the majority of responses. "I think I identify with them more, because that's where I come from. I try very hard to balance that in the classroom and to look at what my expectations are, " (*Juanita*). Edwin, originally stated he did not treat working-class students differently, but later talked about his ability to connect with working-class students by changing his language; "When I get around people in the trades, I can flip right back to when I was working in the trades. The language takes on a whole different level of, of discourse." Modifications in language was a change in behavior shared by John, who stated, "I use very common language, I don't try to think that I'm more than they are or anything."

Other participants, who did not identify with a working-class background, nonetheless indicated an appreciation for the life experiences of a working-class student, and justified accommodations based upon an overall understanding of struggles students may encounter.

Lestat shared one example pertaining to a particular student,

> I had a student who worked in the evenings and basically was coming straight to an 8:00 class and because of that, uh there was often some difficulty getting there on time, so that student was never penalized in terms of, uh, attendance and they were given time extensions, uh for when they came to our exams, because I have a time limit.

Similarly, Joe noted the complexity of providing such accommodations, even when he understand that some students were challenged by outside forces,

> If you didn't follow the same rules for everybody and I'm letting you by, then the people that did the quiz on time, now they're at a disadvantage. Fairness is important, but in the scheme of society if my not letting you take that quiz, you're going to drop out. You're going to...Whereas if I do let you take that quiz...but you don't know where that's going when you make that decision.

Higher Education and the Working-Class: To Educate, Train, and/or Change

The final part of the interview process sought to explore how faculty perceived the role of higher education, how this varied for working-class students, and how this related to issues of larger social inequality. A basic theme that first emerged was the contradictory roles of higher education, for students and for society. All participants began their responses with an emphasis upon education as a means of attaining a broader understanding of self and society. Several argued that higher education should result in individual transformation and achievement of individual potential. Molona addressed this most succinctly with, "I think the purpose of higher education is to help people achieve their call in life. Um, and by that I

mean the intersection of their natural talents and their goals." Maynard shared, "I like to see it as changing students' lives."

A holistic perception of higher education was initially offered, but an emphasis upon the "skilling" or training attained through higher education was also shared. At times these supposed contradictions were presented as complementary.

> The purpose is to be well-rounded and understand each discipline, so that you can go into the workforce with knowledge and problem solving. (*Sharnia*)
>
> To find their strengths and continue to grow in those areas, and, and that may lead to further education, or a particular career, or a particular life interest, whatever. But, take the talents and nurture them. (*Max*)

Other times, faculty articulated a pragmatic understanding of education's link to employment.

> I think it is tied to economic status, and about hopefully getting that piece of paper saying that, "You are specialized in this area." Maybe it might lead to some type of internship or something. (*John*)
>
> One is that, uh, depending on your field of interest, you may need specialized training which is just required for you to be able to do the job. Second it's to show yourself and prospective employers that you are capable of budgeting your time, you can actually accept challenges in material you are unfamiliar with and be successful at it. (*Lestat*)

Only one participant focused solely on the transformative nature of higher education. Maynard's response clearly indicated a perception that at least in his classes, the role of higher education was meant to change how students see themselves and the world,

> I'm not teaching them a job skill or something like this, I'm teaching'em, hey, where is your passion? How do you address these bigger questions of...you know, life and death, and how are we here and why are we here, and what should we do here? What is the purpose of higher education? I come back to the same thing, I think it's to give students a different world---different worlds to live in, to make themselves see meaning in life...

When asked how the purpose or experience of higher education may vary for the working-class students, a majority of participants indicated that working-class students focus on the financial rewards associated with getting a college education. Sharnia stated, "I think it's to get to a better place financially." Juanita placed this perception within a framework of social mobility; "Forward could be 'I worked in a textile plant and now I don't have that as an option and I'm going to come learn how to do medical coding.' That may not even be a degree. It may be a certificate that's enough to get me back into the workforce to take care of my family." Bud simply said that the purpose of higher education for working-class students was to "be higher working class." Joe remarked, "to maybe no longer be working-class."

Participants also expressed frustration with working-class students' assumed view of educational attainment as solely a means of increasing earnings. Several commented that the broader view offered via higher education was lost in the focus of gaining academic credentials for employment. Maynard responded,

> A lot of times they do think, well, I just need this piece of paper because I can't get a job without this, this, this, and this. So I think a lot of them see it that way, like this is a means to an end, and at the end is for me to get a

paycheck so I can support my family and get on with life. Um...versus, you know, finding a deeper sense of meaning.

Other participants acknowledged that the struggles of working-class students left them little opportunity to fully engage in classes that did not readily connect to career goals, nor to consider or pursue other educational or career options. John remarked, "More of what I think initially it probably is their mind of thinking, 'How will I survive a year from now? This is what I need to do, and later on, if more opportunities come available, I will pursue it.'"

In regards to specifically how working-class students may experience higher education, the majority of respondents articulated concern that working-class students experienced a period of transitioning. Working-class students were deemed as sometimes ignorant of basic expectations for success in college, such as attending class, taking notes, and asking questions. This lack of understanding was noted as the result of not having previously been exposed to the cultural expectations of higher education, either through family, friends, or current workplace.

In response to this perception, several faculty spoke of "teaching" students how to "do" college. "I really encourage them, help them try to understand how they can do this and be successful in the higher education business," (*Edwin*).

The majority of faculty also spoke to the perceived difficulty working-class students may experience upon entering college, as it varied from a working-class background. Several responded that financial limitations in the family meant less exposure to, understanding of, or attainment of technology and other resources. Sharnia replied, "Oh, it's completely different (for the working-class student). It's 'I can't afford the book. The library hours weren't open. I

don't have a personal computer. How am I supposed to get to the library when I get off at midnight?'" Joe connected a lack of resources to issues of feeling inadequate in college, "If I see them in a computer lab, because that's the only internet they have. If they say 'Can we have the test on this day because on this day I can access the lab?' Digital access for me, since I do so much with that, is sometimes, it's familiarity with the tools. If you grew up middle-class you know your way around a computer."

How comfortable one felt with higher education was also identified as varying with social class. Several participants spoke of how working-class individuals may feel uncomfortable and uneasy with higher education, particularly as it related to a feeling of belonging. John remarked that, "they'd probably decide initially it's a challenge, just being in a setting where they're not used to, or something they haven't done in a while." Joe wondered to what extent working-class students experienced the feeling of being an "imposter" and how accurate students were in gauging whether they belonged in college. He further remarked that this feeling of impostership probably led to students not asking questions when they should. Edwin spoke to issue of comfort, as it related to their worldview as working individuals,

> I think a lot if it is at the beginning is intimidating, okay, it's out of their comfort zone. You know, they've been working, and they can do the jobs, and they know how to do that, but the job of higher education is different. And I think a lot of times they don't know the ground rules, and...it's intimidating, you know what I mean?

The relationship between higher education and larger social inequality was the last prompt in the interview process. Several faculty noted that inequality in society was reflected in the student populations served by various institutions of higher education. Sharnia replied, "if you have an upper class student, they're going to have a better opportunity to go into Ivy League, higher education schools with better reputations. The lower class is obviously going to have the opportunity of going to a community college, so there are huge inequalities." Few participants explicitly acknowledged that lower income students were more likely to make-up their own classes. Joe was one of those, and he replied, "I think we see students who are on the lower end of the social inequality scale quite often at our college. It's a difficult thing to change broadly. There are probably many people out there politically who don't want to see it changed."

The question of how higher education could challenge larger issues of social inequality was also addressed, but more often as a matter of what could versus what does happen. Molona remarked, "We could be a leveler. Our classrooms could become a place where we take the theory and we ask our students to reflect on that theory and then openly discuss the realities of their situations." Too, the limitations of this mobility were noted. Bud offered, "they (working-class students) know they are working-class, and at the community college, what is offers them is, uh, a better home and a better position, but it's a different skill set for a different type of labor. A step up, but, yeah, they have limited dreams, but I'm happy they have dreams."

Higher education as an institution perhaps maintaining or perpetuating social inequality was never discussed. However, several participants did perceive and articulate that

economic structures and policies played a major factor in how students could experience higher education. For example, Juanita discussed the extent to which students would return again and again to college, in order to gain new skills because their previous skills had become outdated in a quickly changing workplace. Lestat reminisced about how labor had changed from something not requiring formal education or credentials, and being respectable, to a devalued status in society;

> It's a major problem that you are looked down on. You are not working to your potential. You are somehow less than others because you don't want to go to college....Now days, you want to be a factory worker. What's wrong with you? Don't you have any ambition?

Two additional participants discussed the extent to which individual social mobility was expected, via educational attainment, and each had a very different interpretation. Juanita questioned whether she had the right to expect students to change or want to change their social class standing as result of going to college;

> Should people have to move up in class? What does class say? Does class say that I'm not good enough? Because I'll tell you what, I want somebody to be able to come fix my heating and air conditioning unit. I want to be able to go on campus and go into the bathroom and it be clean. If those are working-class people, what, is that my right to look at them and say, 'you need to go get an education so you can...' If that's where they're okay being, then why should I tell them that they're not okay?

Joe simply asked, "would someone want to stay at working-class?...I think...I don't think there's many people who want to...if they're in a...if they're poor, I don't think they want to stay poor." And finally, connecting back to the complexities involved with making accommodations for working-class students, one participant noted that inequality was inevitable, and as such "forcing equality in a classroom" would deny opportunity for others to achieve their potential.

Thematic Findings

Pulling from the individual participants' interviews, and as these responses addressed the interview guide, the following thematic findings appear, which answer the question "How do community college perceive working-class students?" Chapter five discusses the extent to which these findings illustrate theoretical-based frameworks and assumptions.

Social Class: Seen but Not Understood

The extent to which faculty perceive working-class students can be discussed in terms of the binary categories of invisible and visible. An invisible classification denotes an absence of awareness; a visible classification denotes an explicit awareness. In placing aspects of the participants' perceptions in either/or category, the theoretical assumptions embedded in faculty's ability to see working-class students are exposed and made available for analysis. Between these versions of reality and truth, questions of how and when to acknowledge social class as a status, culture, experience and social force arise. It is as though faculty are experiencing a type of dyslexia as it relates to social class: they can see the consequences and markers of a working-class culture and identity, but these consequences

and markers are understood in a limited context, and thus are not "read" with complete understanding. The "text" is there; it is seen, but not understood.

Several questions in the interview process specifically provide insight in whether or not, and/or how faculty “sees" working-class students. The first of these questions asked, "how can you tell if a student is working-class?" The majority of respondents replied that they could not tell, and several included comments to imply that one should not seek to see students in terms of social class. At times it seemed that participants truly could not tell, while at other times participants seemed to feel it would be inappropriate to consider doing so, even if they could. Two participants, who did directly answer this question, prefaced their replies with comments to ensure that they meant no harm nor were they exhibiting prejudice by admitting to being able to tell if a student is working-class.

Two additional questions asked about faculty members' interactions with working-class students. The majority of participants initially claimed that they did not act differently with working-class students, nor would they or should they. Throughout the interview process however, all participants spoke of students' struggles and challenges in regards to attaining a college education. These struggles and challenges were things to be "worked around", but never placed within a larger understanding of social class and social class inequality. Faculty "see" the struggles and challenges of working-class students, to the extent that they will make accommodations, but not to the extent that the student's classed location is "seen." Accommodations are made when students share information about struggles, and such accommodations can be a source of frustration and negotiation for faculty, as they seek

to provide equitable opportunities for success at the same time they seek to be "class-blind" to students' class location, experiences, and culture.

Working-Class Defined by Struggles

Social class is, and hence working-class students are, difficult to read and understand, by faculty. Faculty is either unable or unwilling to "see" social class in a formal sense. That is, they are either unable or unwilling to "see" social class as reflective of socioeconomic inequality or as indicative of a shared way of life and identity. However, the consequences of social class, in terms of academic preparedness, opportunities, language, and other social class markers are "seen" by faculty. Faculty implicitly exhibited acknowledgement of working-class students in their *descriptions* of student struggles, pertaining to work restraints, family responsibilities, academic preparedness, comfort with the culture of higher education, and career goals. Thus, social class, and possibly working-class students, is visible.

When asked directly to acknowledge aspects of the "working-class" experience, however, faculty were uneasy with connecting the struggles they see in the general student population to one specific social class category. Additionally, struggles and challenges experienced by students, as perceived by faculty, represent the negative attributes of class; that is, social class is framed in how one may be disadvantaged. Positive attributes such as motivation and "work ethic" were used to describe the student population in general, and at times, directly for working-class students. But these too are grounded against the challenges of a disadvantaged economic standing. The larger question of how a working-class status

represents a way of life or of identity is not considered, likewise illustrating the extent to which working-class students remain "invisible" to faculty.

Working-Class Students Must Learn College

A third significant finding pertains to the struggles of working-class students, and their subsequent experiences with higher education. A majority of participants articulated concern that working-class students experienced a period of transitioning into college, which required students to gain understanding of and comfort with the culture of college. Working-class students were deemed as sometimes ignorant of basic expectations for success in college, such as attending class, taking notes, and asking questions. This lack of understanding was noted as the result of not having previously been exposed to the cultural expectations of higher education, either through family, friends, or current employment. As a result, several faculty spoke of "teaching" students how to "do" college.

The majority of faculty spoke to the perceived difficulty working-class students may experience upon entering college, as it varied from a working-class background. Several responded that financial limitations in the family meant less exposure to, understanding of, or attainment of technology and other resources. Several participants spoke of how working-class individuals may feel uncomfortable and uneasy with higher education, particularly as it related to a feeling of belonging.

Working-Class Students Should Transform via Higher Education

All participants articulated an emphasis upon education as a means of attaining a broader understanding of self and society. Several argued that higher education should result in individual transformation and achievement of individual potential. Embedded within these

remarks is a lack of acknowledgement that previous demands for working-class students to "learn college" may have already resulted in transformation for the working-class student. Previous perceptions of a working-class students as struggling and inadequate illustrate an assumption that working-class, as a culture, is deficient and inadequate. Consequently, transformation of culture is expected and assumed to occur for the working-class student. It is the social class of the student that must change, and not the culture of higher education, which represents middle-class culture.

Additionally, a majority of participants indicated that working-class students focus on the financial rewards associated with getting a college education. At times, faculty articulated a pragmatic and empathetic understanding of education's link to employment for the working-class. However, many also expressed frustrations with working-class students' assumed view of educational attainment as solely a means of increasing earnings, in lieu of more abstract personal growth and transformation.

Social mobility was articulated as a change in the person, as a whole, and less upon one's earning power. This contradicts the earlier descriptions of working-class as grounded in income terms, and discounts the associated economic struggles articulated previously by participants to define or see the working-class. Consequently, while higher education should be a means to change social class, participants perceived that personal transformation is also a required element of social mobility.

Summary

This chapter presents the findings from this study; first by describing the characteristics of the participants, followed by a presentation of participants' interviews

containing key concepts and reflecting pertinent comments aligned with the coding mechanism, organized then according to how these comments answered the question specific interview questions, and finally how thematic findings answered the question of "how do community college faculty perceive working-class students?" The thematic findings are identified as:

- Social class: Seen but not understood.
- Working-class is defined by struggles.
- Working-class students must learn college.
- Working-class students should transform via higher education.

In Chapter 5, the analysis of these findings, as they are similar to and different from the literature regarding the working-class and the experiences of working-class students, is presented. Assumptions and implications for each of these findings is articulated, followed with a discussion of how they reflect theoretical frameworks and assumptions. Recommendations are provided in regards to these findings. Lastly, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and suggested research into these issues is articulated.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilized qualitative research methods to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provided the general theoretical framework, and the literature-based descriptions of classed educational experiences offered a structure by which the findings were analyzed and reported. In this chapter, I review the rational for and problem statement of the study, and then present the findings as they align with the research questions: how do community college faulty members perceive working-class students, and how are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students? Each of the findings is first offered as a summary, followed by a discussion of its relationship to the literature. Assumptions within each finding, and implications for each finding are embedded within this presentation. Recommendations are provided in regards to the specific finding's implications, and I conclude with a general discussion regarding the significance of the study.

Rationale and Problem Statement

Social class matters (hooks, 2000) and for the purpose of this study, it most particularly matters in the area of higher education, where one's class status can determine opportunity, experiences, and attainment (Sacks, 2007). Given that this study explored how community college faculty members view a specified classed group of students, the working-

class, it is also important to note that the role of teacher has influence on how social class is created and given meaning, and consequently influence upon, the experience of the student (Goto, 1999: VanGalen, 2000). The literature clearly argues that working-class individuals are disadvantaged in education, as a consequence of their classed location, as it relates to both economic and cultural resources, (Adair, 2003; Apple, 1988; Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Clawson & Leiblum, 2008; Green, 2003; hooks, 1994, 2000; Hurst, 2012; Jenson, 2004; Law, 1995; Nesbit, 2005; VanGalen, 2000; Wright, 2000). Part of the vision, for this study, was to better understand how this comes to be; that is, why does one's classed background and identity have such influence within the area of education? Many studies have examined the extent to which it is the classed experienced of being working-class that "explains" such disadvantages. Such approaches located the "problem" of being working-class in higher education, as being working-class. The context and culture of higher education is less likely to be examined. In part, this study sought to consider, from community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students, and framed against theoretical assumptions of social class, how and why working-class class students experience such challenges in higher education.

Education perpetuates existing patterns of inequality when it ignores the manner in which educational assumptions and practices emulate and encourage a particular classed understanding of the world (Lareau, 2011), thus putting those who do not align with the dominant classed-culture at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, social class tends to be "invisible" or unacknowledged by those for whom a difference of classed experiences never occurs. In a similar manner to race/ethnicity and gender, one does not see how the membership within

these social constructed categories influence one's life unless one's membership is viewed as different or inferior to the supposed-dominant norm. Norms are an aspect of culture, and the culture of higher education embraces and reflects in particular, characteristics of the middle-class (Green, 2003; Reay, David & Ball, 2001). This means that working-class students, as a group "different" from the middle-class, are seen as non-normative, and assigned the perception of Other.

This is a particularly relevant point in this study, given that pedagogy and practice in the classroom may generally represent middle-class norms by which working-class students are judged (Green, 2003; hooks, 1994; VanGalen, 2000), and that the overall culture of the community college requires students to assimilate to the dominant culture in order to "succeed" (Shaw, Valdez, & Rhoads, 1999; Rhoads, 1999). As a result, the dominant culture of the middle-class, in education, remains a powerful barrier to marginalized social classes, and perpetuates advantages for others, in part because it remains "invisible" to those who do benefit.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Assumptions become visible when a contrast of understanding is available. The issue of social class in higher education has been framed against the challenges of low-income individuals entering into and experiencing the culture of academia. Working-class students are well aware of their classed "difference" while attaining higher education (Aries, 2008; Grigsby, 2009; Martineau, 2007), and faculty who identify as having a working-class identity or background report challenges in negotiating conflicting understandings of the world and self as a result of different classed contexts and cultures. With a historical focus on the

working-class student as the object of study, the normative, and thus empowered status of higher education remains invisible and immune to critique, and consequently, change. The "problem" has been defined in the characteristics, culture, and financial ability of the working-class student. The "problem" has been defined and studied via organizational practices and policies. The "problem" has not been framed in the context of faculty members' perceptions, specifically those faculty members who are more likely to encounter working-class students, community college faculty. This study sought to provide a different understanding of the "problem" by investigating and deconstructing community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students.

Within this study, I sought to make visible the assumptions and values of social class, as articulated by said faculty, by asking 1) how do community college faculty members perceive working-class students, and 2) how are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perceptions of working-class students. In doing so, the findings help reframe the experience of working-class students against the *perceptions* of social class. The problem becomes then not the social class location of the student, but rather how a particular class location, in this case that of being working-class, is "invisible", unacknowledged and devalued against the middle-classed cultural bias inherent within higher education.

Research Question 1: How Do Community College Faculty Members Perceive Working-Class Students?

Social Class: Seen but Not Understood

Faculty can see the consequences and markers of a working-class culture and identity, but these consequences and markers are understood in a limited context, and thus are not "read" with complete understanding. The "text" is there; it is seen, but not understood. The ability to "see" social class, or more accurately, the *inclination* to "see" social class, was relatively absent from participants' responses. The majority of respondents replied that they could not tell: "I can't," (*Juanita*); "You can't, unless they tell you, um, or at least I don't...I don't presume to know," (*Molona*); "Only if they admit to it," (*Sharnia*); "I can't. I don't even try," (*Lestat*). Several included comments to imply that one *should not* seek to see students in terms of social class: "I would like to think that before I make a prejudgment I ask questions... (*Juanita*); "I don't know if this person is definitely working-class but there might be things...because I try not to assume anything about anyone," (*Joe*); "Another thing is not to judge a book by their cover...," (*John*); "You can get bent up on who's what and this is this person and this is that person, this is working-class, this is not, this is race, color, gender, all those types of things but when you see through that, you see the humanity of...of just people," (*Maynard*).

At times it seemed that participants truly could not tell, while at other times participants seemed to feel it would be inappropriate to consider doing so, even if they indeed perceived clues, however fleeting, about a student's social class. Two participants, who did provide a direct response of how to tell if a student was working-class, prefaced their replies

with comments to ensure that they meant no harm nor were they exhibiting prejudice by admitting to being able to tell if a student is working-class: "Now this is not, I want this, I want you to know this, this is not meant in any perj-or, there's no, it's not a negative thing, okay?" (*Edwin*). The majority of participants initially claimed that they did not act differently with working-class students, nor would they or should they. "If there's no evidence that they're not doing okay, or they don't come to me, I don't change the way I treat them...," (*Molona*). "...Since I don't really ask everybody and I don't know unless they bring it up to me, I would hope I treat all of them the same," (*Lestat*).

Throughout the interview process however, all participants spoke of students' struggles and challenges in regards to attaining a college education. These struggles and challenges were things to be "worked around", but never placed within a larger understanding of social class and social class inequality; "It's not that I expect less, it's that I'm more wiling to, um, work with their situation and maybe give a little more time or maybe, you know, I still expect the same outcome," (*Molona*). Faculty "see" the struggles and challenges of working-class students, to the extent that they will make accommodations, or can express understanding or empathy for student situations, but not to the extent that the student's classed location is "read" explicitly, "People come to me and I asked them to do so, that if you're not going to be around, you know these things ahead of time we can make all kinds of arrangements. I don't care what it is. You show me the effort and I'll work with you," (*Lestat*). Accommodations were described in situations, when students share information about struggles, and such accommodations can be a source of frustration and negotiation for faculty, as they desired to provide equitable opportunities for success at the

same time they seek to be "class-blind" to students' class location, experiences, and culture; "Fairness is important, but in the scheme of society if my not letting you take that quiz, you're going to drop out...Whereas if I do let you take that quiz...but you don't know where that's going to go when you make that decision," (*Joe*).

Assumptions and implications. As previously noted, social class matters (hooks, 2000) and it is explicitly evident in the realm of higher education. An overview of the literature provides evidence that class struggles within higher education, particularly for working-class populations, occur (Apple, 1988; Clawson & Leiblum, 2008; hooks, 2000; Jenson, 2004; Law, 1995; Nesbit, 2005; Wright, 2000). Additionally, studies have explored the extent to which a lower social class status results in identity and cultural conflict, as well as increased economic burden and stress, as a consequence of attaining higher education (Adair, 2003a; Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Hurst, 2012). This study's finding that social class is seen but not understood aligns with other studies that argue higher education does not address social class as a variable in the experience, (hooks, 1989; Stuber, 2011; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993).

More significant, however, is that the participants' articulation of an inability to see social class or an unwillingness to consider the acceptability of recognizing social class does not subsequently mean a "class-neutral" environment. Educational processes perpetuate patterns of social inequality when assumptions are made regarding the existence of social class, and one such assumption identified in this study is that social class is invisible or should be invisible. This is a middle-classed privileged assumption of what perhaps should be, versus what is, in regards to education. Working-class students are well aware of their

classed "difference" while attaining higher education (Aries, 2008; Grigsby, 2009; Martineau, 2007). To pretend that social class cannot or should not be visible ignores the reality that it already does matter, at least to the working-class student.

The role of the teacher has influence on how social class is created and given meaning, and consequently influence upon, the experience of the student (Goto, 1999; VanGalen, 2000). However, educational process will continue to perpetuate existing patterns of inequality if faculty ignore the manner in which educational assumptions and practices emulate and encourage a particular classed understanding of the world (hooks, 1989; Lareau, 2011; VanGalen, 2000).

Working-Class Defined by Struggles

Social class is, and hence working-class students are, seen but not understood by faculty. That is, and as previously discussed, faculty are resistant to *articulating* that a student "is working-class." However, the *consequences* of social class, in terms of academic preparedness, opportunities, language, and other social class markers *were* "seen" by faculty: "They have no clue and we speak a language that is unlike anything else," (*Juanit*a); "I don't think working-class students are dumber. I just think that they are not coming from a similar academic background," (*Joe*); "A lot of the language I take for granted doesn't communicate to them, the common language for me isn't for them," (*Bud*); "There are a number of students who often ask me things as simple as, 'I don't have a computer at home to do my homework'...as simple as that where they're unaware of the resources that are available," (*John*).

Faculty implicitly exhibited acknowledgement of working-class students in their *descriptions* of student struggles, pertaining to work restraints, family responsibilities, academic preparedness, comfort with the culture of higher education, and career goals, although an explicit acknowledgement of social class was previously absent: These articulated descriptions of students' struggles and challenges were in part a response to an understanding of the overall community college student population, but more importantly, were specifically provided when asked to share perceived benefits and challenges of working-class students, and experiences with working-class students. The majority of these descriptions were framed as negative, although positive attributes such as motivation and "work ethic" were used to describe the student population in general, and at times, directly for working-class students: "I think the lower class, or working student appreciates what they are given," (*Sharnia*); "They also bring in more life experiences," (*Molona*); "The way I describe all community college students are just, just tend to seem so motivated and um, really view education as a way out...so the drive, the interest, the motivation...," (*Max*). Significantly, both negative and positive descriptions of working-class students by faculty indicate an understanding that being working-class is an economically deficient status and subsequent struggle: "It's a hard life and they work hard for their money, and it's usually not that much money..." (*Edwin*); "I know that, a lot of times they're working multiple jobs, they're working late, they've got kids..." (*Maynard*).

A focus upon the working-class, when it is "seen", as a struggle, implies a limited acknowledgment of a working-class culture and identity. "They are struggling to make a living, they're struggling to raise a family. They're struggling, and it's a very big struggle and

a very big sacrifice to come to school," (*Edwin*). "The working-class students are struggling for D's and C's because they're working at a full-time job, they are probably taking care of family members, if not their own children," (*Sharnia*) In short, the "difference" of being working-class is framed as negative, thus situating working-class students as the Other.; As "different", as Other, issues of class and higher education remain grounded in the "deficiency" of the working-class, versus the invisible and privileged "norm" of higher education.

Assumptions and implications. As previously discussed, working-class students do experience challenges and struggles within higher education. These include unfamiliarity or practice with critical thinking (Cheung, Rudowics, & Lang, 2001; Gos, 1995), an unease with asking questions or questioning authority (Gos, 1995; Lareau, 2011; Lubrano, 2004), feeling as if they do not belong in college (Marks, Turner & Osborne, 2003; Lubrano, 2004; Stuber, 2011; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993), and feeling as if they must hide or let go of their working-class identity and relationships (Adair & Dahlberg, 2003; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). The finding in this study that community college faculty members perceived working-class students as struggling aligns with the literature, but the *reason* presented by faculty members for these struggles was articulated as a consequence of inadequate resources, difficulty balancing work and/or family responsibilities with school, and a lack of understanding regarding the college experience, all emitted from a negative framing of working-class.

This implies that faculty members perceive that the struggles of working-class students emerge more precisely from the "problem" of *being* working-class. That is,

working-class students struggle because they are working-class. Absent from this perception is an acknowledgement that the middle-class based expectations and culture within higher education makes the culture, identity, and life experience of working class students a "struggle". Other understandings of working-class, in terms of power, family relationships, utilization of language, and different values and norms are in part, only acknowledged in a limited manner, and mostly as it reflects a deficient culture. Working-class students are evaluated against the middle-class expectations of higher education, and subsequently, are defined as struggling because they are in effect, struggling to learn, negotiate, and succeed in a new culture.

One particular finding helps to illustrate this point. A common remark from participants in the study was that they could only tell if a student was working-class if the student explicitly made this information known. Additionally, accommodations for working-class or "struggling" students could only be made when students made it known to the instructor that there was a problem, such as family, work, or transportation issues. Participants voiced concern and frustration that they could only help such students if they knew about the issues, and this required the students to initiate the discussion. This implicit requirement for the student to initiate a conversation was portrayed as reaching out to students via encouragement to let the instructor know about such problems, as well as building responsibility on the part of the student by emphasizing the student's accountability for academic success.

This expectation that working-class students would "out" themselves, and subsequently ask for assistance or accommodations is in conflict with the culture of the

working-class. As previously discussed, working-class individuals may be characterized as proud of their ability to be self-reliant (Aries & Seider, 2005; Skeggs, 1997/2002), appreciative of conformity and rules (Lubrano, 2004; Lareau, 2011; Kohn, 1969), distrustful of those with higher levels of education (Williams, 2012), and ill at ease with negotiation and asking for assistance (Streib, 2011). These are attributes of a working-class identity and culture; they become the basis of struggles in higher education when faculty does not perceive that their expectations counter the culture of the working-class. In a similar manner, other "struggles", as articulated by participants in this study, and in the literature regarding the experiences of working-class individuals, such as inability to communicate, inability to understand the norms/expectations of the classroom, and inability to balance work/family/school responsibilities, are the result of using middle-class expectations to judge a working-class experience.

Working-Class Students Must Learn College

Working-class students are perceived as lacking an understanding of higher education. A majority of participants articulated concern that working-class students experienced a period of transitioning into college, which required students to gain understanding of and comfort with the culture of college. "If they have no context for higher education I think it is a struggle, because not only are they learning the content in the classroom but then they're learning the system of what higher education is," (*Juanita*). Working-class students were deemed as sometimes ignorant of basic expectations for success in college, such as attending class, taking notes, and asking questions, "How to take the tests, how to write papers, how to be serious, how to read text," (*Edwin*). This ignorance was

identified as a consequence of not having previous exposure to or knowledge of college, via family, friends, or current employment. "Well, if you've never known anybody that went to college, how would you know that you need to go to class? How do you know that unless someone tells you?" (*Juanita*).

The majority of faculty spoke of the perceived difficulty working-class students may experience upon entering college, as it reflected a working-class background. "Some have their higher education as something that is never going to be a question. Others, that is something beyond them that is almost something to be avoided for what I understand in some circles...it has never been emphasized....no family support...no peer support," (*Lestat*). Several participants responded that financial limitations in the family meant less exposure to, understanding of, or attainment of technology and other resources. Participants also spoke of how working-class individuals may feel uncomfortable and uneasy with higher education, particularly as it related to a feeling of belonging, because they did not know "how to do" college. "They'll (working-class students) will walk away from a conversation not understanding what happened because they don't have the context to actually get that...they'll nod and shake their head because they don't want to appear student..." (*Juanita*).

Assumptions and implications. This finding relates to the previous discussion of how faculty defines working-class students in terms of struggles. A major area of "struggle" then for the working-class student is knowledge of and comfort with college. To this extent, faculty members appear to appreciate that a difference in cultural backgrounds means that indeed, working-class students may encounter a "culture-shock" upon entering college. Similar to the discussion of how struggles are framed, however, faculty members perceive

that working-class students must change, must learn "the ways" of college; versus a consideration that college itself should consider modifications and change to better align with the experience of the working-class. The assumption is that the culture of college is what it is, and working-class students must be resocialized to "fit in" or feel comfortable with college.

In regards to the discomfort felt by working-class students attending college, at least part of this discomfort emerges from working-class students recognizing that they have not been previously socialized for higher education, and that higher education illustrates a different culture and subsequent identity (Ostrove, 2003; Law, 1995: Stuber, 2001). Specifically, working class students must learn new rules about what is valued, what is not, how to speak, when to speak, and how to establish or change relationships (Jensen, 2004; Lubrano, 2004; Stuber, 2011). Faculty perceptions that working-class students must learn higher education aligns with these articulated experiences of working-class individuals in higher education.

Working-Class Students Should Transform via Higher Education.

Participants' perceptions of higher education, as a means of individual and social change, were a significant undercurrent in the larger discussion of working-class students' experiences. Specifically, faculty members articulated an emphasis upon education as a means of attaining a broader understanding of self and society, and subsequent individual transformation. Higher education was perceived to be a vehicle by which individual potential could be met. "The purpose of higher education is to help people achieve their call in life," (*Molona*); "...To help students identify and continue to develop their talents..." (*Max*). "I like

to see it as changing students' lives...that's first and foremost, for me to just like give them different perspectives...open up their worlds," (*Maynard*). For students to be "successful" they must first recognize where growth could/should occur, and subsequently aspire, through education, to attain said transformation. "And it's hard, I think for students to understand the value of having that broad-based approach...some working-class student might be frustrated by that broad-based, the general education requirements...because they are so intent on, financially, 'how can I get certified in some way...for a particular job?'" (*Max*). Embedded within these remarks are two important points. First, this perception lacks an acknowledgement that previous demands for working-class students to "learn college" may have already resulted in transformation for the working-class student. Secondly, previous perceptions of working-class students as struggling and inadequate illustrate an assumption that the working-class, as a culture, is deficient and inadequate, and thus requires transformation.

The perception that higher education is a means by which social class or perhaps class identity should change is evident in faculty's concern with working-class students' motivation for education. A majority of participants indicated that working-class students focus on the financial rewards associated with getting a college education. "I think it is tied to economic status, and about hopefully getting that piece of paper saying that, 'you are specialized in this area,'" (*John*). Faculty did articulate at times, a pragmatic and empathetic understanding of education's link to employment for the working-class, "in order for me to be a decent successful person, I may basically require some kind of degree so I can do this job because I can't just work at McDonald's. There are few just labor jobs. You can't go get a job in the

factory, and think that job is going to be there and raise a family, and do okay at it. I think that that's gone and it not right," (*Lestat*). Others expressed frustrations with working-class students' assumed view of educational attainment as solely a means of increasing earnings, in lieu of more abstract personal growth and transformation. "What are you doing? Are you just earning a paycheck? Are you just getting a piece of paper or are you, you know, adding to life or taking away from life?" (*Maynard*). This indicates a perception that higher education should be a means to change social class, via increased economic earning potential, but more importantly, through personal transformation.

Assumptions and implications. This finding aligns with the literature regarding cultural capital, and class-based expectations in higher education. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue that engagement with higher education requires an understanding of how and why education is profitable, desirable, and attainable. Faculty appears to argue for a middle-class perception of how and why education is a valued commodity, and vehicle for transformation. In this study, working-class students' understanding of education, experience in education, and motivation for education are valued when they align with that of the faculty. Assimilation into middle class culture reflects a devaluing of working-class culture. Accordingly, this inequality of culture works in the interests of and for the benefit of the upper class, as it both delineates class differences and justifies that such differences equate to unequal value and worth (Sweeney, 1997, p. 260).

Archer and Hutchings (2000) present the argument that working-class individuals must negotiate the social and economic risks of pursuing higher education, as it differs from and challenges their current class position and relationships. The challenges faced by lower

social class individuals in their relationship to and engagement with higher education may be explained in part by their lack of cultural capital as it relates to an understanding of how higher education is negotiated and experienced, as well as being prepared for the experience (Sacks, 2007; Stuber, 2011), but as previously discussed, this framework also exhibits potential for classist assumptions and practices. For example, and as related to studies on the cultural capital attained through higher education, a focus on learning as it achieves human capital subsequently encourages specific and limited access to higher education for working-class individuals, thus restricting working-class individuals from the creative process of knowledge production and engagement with the creation of cultural norms within higher education (Tett, 2005).

Larger cultural norms and values assume that social class boundaries are fluid, allowing individuals, with sufficient skill, effort, and motivation, to move from a lower social class standing to a higher and more valued classed position (Mantsios, 1995). This ideology asserts support for upward mobility via change at the individual level, such as perseverance and hard work (Hochschild, 1995). Faculty members' perceptions regarding the role of higher education align with this assumption that such individual change is possible, and more significantly, should occur. An emphasis upon individual change assumes that the individual, as a student, is deficient or lacking. This implies a particular charge for the working-class student, for whom a classed culture and identity is not generally acknowledged nor valued. Perceived as deficient in identity and culture, the working-class student is expected to "overcome" classed-based obstacles in order to achieve social mobility. The larger economic system and subsequent classist ideology that perpetuates inequality is not acknowledged, and

as such, is granted immunity from critique and potential change. One's place in a class-based system of inequality is implied to be the problem, versus the system itself. Hence, inequality is overcome by individual transformation into or rather, conforming to, a culture and subsequent identity aligned with the middle-class.

Research Question 2: How are Class-Based Frameworks and Assumptions Present in Community College Faculty Members' Perceptions of Working-Class Students?

In this section, I offer an interpretation of faculty member's perceptions of working-class students, via three broad theoretical frameworks. The previous section outlined the four major findings, in regards to how community college faculty members perceive working-class students: social class is "invisible", working-class is defined by struggles, working-class students must learn college, and working-class students should transform via higher education. Using binary codes associated with three theoretical frameworks regarding social class, structural functionalism, social conflict, and interactionist/interpretivist, the following section presents deconstructed interpretations as they answer the question "How are class-based frameworks and assumptions present in community college faculty members' perception of working-class students?" Each interpretation is first explained as it represents a specific theoretical basis, and then as it relates specifically to the findings.

Functionalist Framework

The following is a summary of a functionalist framework from which to consider social class, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. This bulleted list identifies the means by which to deconstruct faculty perceptions of working-class students, in regards to embedded theoretical assumptions of social class.

- Stratification reflects a societal mandate regarding the needs of society, and ultimately supports the values of said society (Crompton, 2008), in the form of unequal incentives.
- Inequality represents the “natural” hierarchy of individual effort, intelligence, and worth; merit alone determines one’s ascension in society, and social class positionality further represents one’s merit.
- Inequality, as it relates to social class, is justified, explained, and excused (Crompton, 2008).
- Higher education becomes a resource by which individual achievement is fulfilled.
- Individuals make choices regarding educational attainment that allow them to find their niche in an existing economic system (Bradley, 1996).

The working-class is dysfunctional. A majority of faculty made references to the role of education as a means of achieving individual achievement, increasing one's marketability in the workplace, and acquiring a set of skills or knowledge to fit in and/or better overall society. Working-class students were expected or encouraged to learn the "business" of college, which included college resources, academic language, and expected behaviors associated with academic success. "I spend some time with each class on how to, how to become, try, how to become successful in this higher education business. And it's a skill set...what you have to do to be successful," (*Edwi*n). "Just take out a notebook and a pencil, take it. Stake that you know what you're doing, and eventually you'll get there. Fake it until you make it...because nobody has ever told them that," (*Juanita*). These references indicate a functionalist perspective regarding the role of education as a means of maintaining

the systematic process of society, versus challenging systems of inequality. That is, the functional or "right" attributes associated with acquiring higher education meant individual change and transformation to operate within society, "to be well-rounded and understand each discipline, so that you can go into the workforce with knowledge and problem solving," (*Sharni*a). Thus, for a working-class student, the "right way to do" college entails changes for the individual, versus for society. "If you want to stay at working-class...it's almost why would you go to college?" (*Joe*).

Education benefits society, because via educational attainment, the individual changes to fit into society. Society does not change, nor does it need to change; it is the dysfunctional aspects of an individual's life that are out-of-sync with a system that rewards those who exhibit responsibility, desire, and motivation. "Not doing well" in college reflects inadequacies associated with the individual and his/her life experiences. "There is a roadblock, trying to impart something to them...what they expect to learn and what I expect them to learn, two different things. My subject is completely foreign to them, something they've never experienced, never will again after leaving my class, it's not a part of their life...A whole different life perspective can be an obstacle to overcome," (*Bud*). The college experience is not seen as an obstacle for social mobility; rather the life experiences of the working-class student are the obstacles. Working-class students are themselves dysfunctional, and only through the attainment of higher education, for the right purpose of attaining the education, can they become functional.

Conflict Framework

The following is a summary of a conflict framework from which to consider social class, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. This bulleted list identifies the means by which to deconstruct faculty perceptions of working-class students, in regards to embedded theoretical assumptions of social class.

- Stratification reflects different groups' experiences with power and exploitation (Wright, 2000).
- Social class is understood as a system of inequality, as it relates to material conditions, and different groups' access to these conditions thus influencing their position of having or not having power (Zweig, 2000).
- Social class is a continual conflict between two or more groups, within the context of and influenced by specific economic systems.
- Higher education is a resource and mechanism of control by which advantaged groups may maintain their privilege.
- Higher education is a means by which disadvantaged or exploited groups challenge the status quo.

College is a means by which to challenge/change social class. A majority of faculty presented perceptions of working-class students that emphasized struggles and challenges based upon inadequacy of material and cultural resources. Working-class students were identified as lacking power in their work, "students who are working, are a lot of times at the mercy of their jobs and may not have set schedules," (*Molona*); sufficient economic stability, "They don't have a stable financial picture and they probably are accustomed to

going without something for a certain period of time," (*Joe*);, and sustainable attributes such as transportation, "Things as simple as, do I have gas or transportation to get to campus?" (*John*); or childcare, "the awesome level of responsibilities with parenting younger siblings or having many children and not enough support to take care of the children," (*Max*), necessary for academic success.

They were also perceived as having limited exposure to cultural resources such as academic preparedness, either in the home or in previous educational experiences, required or expected in college. Inequality was recognized as the culprit for these inadequacies;

> "You got social inequality of computers, books, and lets just say all of technology, smart phones...Textbooks, attending class or not, depending or on whether or not your job called you in. it is a huge problem...within a community college. you usually have-and I'm not trying to be stereotypical- but to have a profile of a large university such as _____ or ____ and _____, they don't have the serious problems that we have as a community college in the working class student" (*Sharnia*).
>
> "I think we see students who are on the lower end of the social inequality scales quite often at our college. It's a difficult thing to change broadly" (*Joe*).

The source of the inequality was not remarked upon, but explicitly it was inferred that by acquiring education/training, students would have the resources to challenge said inequality, as it influenced their personal experiences. That is, by acquiring education and/or skills, working-class students would "move up" in earnings, thus leaving the consequences of their classed experiences behind. "They know they are working-class, and at the community

college, what it offers them is, uh,a better home and better position, but it's a different skill set for a different type of labor," (*Bud*). Inequality within society would by challenged by and through the attainment of higher education, at least on a personal level.

The lived experiences of working-class students are perceived as reflective of inequality, and also noted as providing a desire, motivation, and a work ethic that made them distinct from upper social class groups. "The working-class student, I think the main motivation is, I mean it's just evolution in terms of becoming more than what they were. I mean bettering their position...bettering their family's situation, bettering their job, getting a better job, making more money, being more successful..." (*Edwin*). "I know that I use language that speaks to certain individuals that already understand a work ethic," (*Molona*). These attributes then exemplified for faculty a reason for and satisfaction in teaching at the community college; by "coaching" working-class individuals through the educational process, the faculty members themselves could claim to challenge larger systems of inequality. Working-class students are perceived to need encouragement to see that higher education becomes a means by which to challenge patterns of inequality, and faculty's role in this encouragement aligned with their perspective of higher education and social inequality.

> "If you try to touch them and you try to care for them and you try to let them know that you care and you try to contact and try to teach so that they can understand you, a lot of them get it...the hardest thing for them is for me to convince them that should really focus, and they, they do the work and do it right...to try to convince them that this is worth it, that this is worthwhile and will benefit them," (*Edwin*).

"It's a balance of, and not losing hope that you can do this, making sure that an education is worthwhile and that you need to keep going and keep trekking in order to raise your social class," (*Sharnia*).

Higher education, as experienced at the community college level, has a double and sometimes contradictory allegiance: workforce development and individual transformation. When working-class students focus upon the relevance of courses to employment opportunities, the potential for individual transformation is curtailed. Individual transformation and personal growth are not necessarily seen in terms of what one can "afford" or rather, not "afford." "The problem is that convincing those caught in that cycle or caught in that particular socio-economic place, that there are resources and there are avenues, and there are ways to get a better education and to make something happen in their life that maybe they want to happen," (*Molona*).

Consequently, while working-class students may seek social mobility via the accumulation of employable knowledge and skills, and thus challenge their personal place in a system of economic inequality, the lack of personal transformation and growth via exposure to and appreciation of a broad-based education limits or stagnates the actuality of social mobility. Faculty concern with or disapproval of working-class students' expectations of higher education aligns with the belief that education is a means for challenging systems of inequality. However, if working-class students do not emulate or live up to faculty expectations of what higher education means as an agent of social change, then patterns of inequality continue unchallenged.

Interactionist/Interpretivist Framework

The following is a summary of an interactionist/interpretivist framework from which to consider social class, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. This bulleted list identifies the means by which to deconstruct faculty perceptions of working-class students, in regards to embedded theoretical assumptions of social class.

- Social class can be understood as a process of interaction and interpretation.
- Class is explored at times as a process, a negotiation, as personal, and as a culture (Archer, 2003a).
- Stratification reflects material and cultural capital in which both determine status, class membership, and experience with class struggles (Bourdieu, 1987).
- Class membership refers to individuals who share conditions of social existence and class is symbolic to and of a lived experience.
- Habitus, defined as a socially constructed system of dispositions by which one's perceptions and actions originate (Wright, 2005), is considered as a means by which class is experienced.
- Higher education reflects an arena by which identity and culture are interpreted and constructed against social class boundaries.

Working-class culture is (un)acknowledged and (de)valued. As noted in faculty responses, a major theme to emerge is faculty perceptions of working-class students as coming from an inadequate or ill-prepared background. Students' previous experience, in regards to education and learning, were deemed insufficient for the expectations of college, particularly as it related to study skills, language, the ability to ask questions, and the ability

to debate or argue a point. The habitus of working-class students then is visible to faculty, primarily as an obstacle to overcome. That is, the culture of working-class students is acknowledged but in a negative manner because it deviates from the expectations of faculty and the larger culture of higher education.

> "I will try to be accommodating but you still have to do the work for the course in which you signed up. And my, kind of my attitude toward a lot of it too, 'well, but I can't come to class, I can't do this, I'm always late,' and my basic response is, but think of this as a job, school as your job. How often do you think you would go, be able to go to a job late, or not show up or not turn in assignments before you get fired?" (*Lestat*).

Working-class students are expected to learn the culture of higher education, without regard to the conflict such negotiation may incur for one's classed group membership or identity. They are expected to shed their working-class "ways of life and interaction" in order to be successful in college. "It's (purpose of higher education) to give students a different world-different worlds to live in-to make them see meaning in life, to open up their world," (*Maynard*). The classed-based assumptions about success in college are invisible to the dominant group, faculty, in the sense that there is little questioning of whether said assumptions are appropriate. In fact, it is assumed that part of the how college success is defined focuses on the transformation of working-class students' identity and relationship to larger society to the extent that the current status of being working-class, as an obstacle, is diminished or conquered. "Would someone want to stay working-class?" (*Joe*).

Aspects of working-class culture, such as being motivated or exhibiting a strong work ethic, are framed against an understanding that working-class students have weighed the costs/benefits of attaining higher education, and accept that education requires an investment upon which they expect a return. The idea of an economic "return" however becomes an area of controversy for faculty; some accepted that success may mean "simply" a better-paying job, "More of what I think initially it probably is their mind of thinking, 'How will I survive a year from now? This is what I need to do and later on, if more opportunities come available, I will pursue'," (*John*); while others lamented the lost opportunity for transformation that such values imply, "I think a lot of them it that way, like this is a means to an end, and at the end is for me to get a paycheck so I can support my family and get on with life. Um...versus, you know, finding a deeper sense of meaning," (*Maynard*). Contradictory values between two classed-groups, working-class and middle-class, become evident, with faculty recognizing a difference, but struggling to accept that the difference should be judged according to their classed standards.

The lived experiences of working-class students is noted, and at times, given value, for what it provides for the learning environment. In general, however, these lived experiences are mostly noted as negative, and detrimental to student success. Working-class culture is the Other by which material may be known or taught, but the concept of Other implies a dominant, silent culture by which all other cultures are judged. Faculty perceive they represent a different way of life, with different lived experiences, but these are perceived as the norm by which other cultures should aspire to be. Faculty recognizes that this contrast of cultures creates a gap in connection for students and faculty. "I think it's one thing to

understand somebody is lower class, but I don't know how much you can empathize if you've never been through it," (*Joe*). "There is a lot of other baggage that I'm just simply not aware of and I have no concept of," (*Lestat*).

The burden of connection remains upon the working-class student, as she/he must make known their culture to the faculty member, specifically as it explains inability to complete course expectations. "If they will communicate that to me, we will work around the situation, and so far I've been very fortunate that most students take me up on that," (*Molona*). "When a student reveals to me, a particular struggle, whatever kind of struggle it is...there's a certain degree of empathy or sympathy," (*Max*). Proactive consideration of the lived experience of working-class students, as reflected in course policy and process, is absent. Working-class students, as the Other, must identify their difference, seek accommodation, and change accordingly, in order to meet faculty standard's of college success. In short, the habitus of working-class deviates and creates challenges for success in the middle-class norms and values of higher education.

Assumptions and Implications

Using three broad-based theoretical approaches to understanding social class, and deconstructing faculty members' perceptions given these approaches, this study identifies three findings representing embedded assumptions: the working-class is dysfunctional, college is a means by which to challenge/change social class, and working-class culture is (un)acknowledged and (de)valued. Together, these assumptions indicate a complex, contradictory, and confused understanding of and approach towards social class. Faculty members see but do not see social class; they do and do not want to accommodate class-

based struggles in higher education. They want to their students to be successful, but they are uncertain as to how to help in an appropriate and equitable manner. At the same time, their lack of understanding represents a middle-class biased perception of teaching and learning, which is also reflective of higher education in general. That is, their personal lack of understanding aligns with academia's resistance to talking about social class. This resistance then implies two specific and pressing concerns: 1) social class as a topic is uncomfortable, impolite, and/or embarrassing, and 2) this transcends into a process by which working-class students become the Other, and subsequently are unacknowledged and devalued.

Social class as a topic appeared to be an uncomfortable, impolite, or embarrassing topic for the participants in this study, specifically when asked to define working-class and how could they tell if a student was working-class. For the larger U.S. population, social class is a touchy subject, in part because it has not been institutionalized or formally recognized by social institutions such as the Census Bureau and the legal system (DiMaggio, 2012). This means that in our daily understanding and experiences, the explicit concept of social class, as a means of identity, negotiation, and interactions is largely invisible. This does not mean that it does not have influence upon identity, negotiation, or interactions; rather, to a large extent, the population is uncomfortable connecting these experiences back to the issue of social inequality.

Some scholars argue that part of the reason for this lack of discourse regarding social class and social inequality is the result of an ideology that purports a classless society in which individual merit alone determines experience and opportunity. The myth of a classless society, the American Dream, perpetuates a belief that one's social class does not matter, and

perhaps contradictorily, that if one *is* of lower social class, it is the result of personal failure and not structural barriers or challenges (Fisher, 1973; Lears, 1985). Thus, to speak of or to see "working-class" implies the embarrassing situation of having to also "see one's personal failure." Hence participants' resistance to "see" or "name" social class, and specifically "working-class" in regards to the perception of students implies that not only may faculty members not be *able* to do so, but that they *choose* not to do so because that would imply and acknowledge the working-class as deficient, and the working-class student as a failure.

A resistance to discuss social class also implies that social class has not yet been fully accepted in larger undertakings regarding difference and diversity within higher education, and that it has not been fully recognized as the Other in the sense that those who "deviate" from the normative middle-class are differentiated and demarcated (Lister, 2004). The "Other" refers to a group for whom difference is reframed as defunct, deficient, and/or devalued (Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, Schrock, Thompson, & Wolkomir, 2000). Acknowledgement of difference and diversity in education is found in the issue of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, (Anderson, 1989; Banks & Banks, 1995; Banks, 2001; Brooks & Edwards, 1997; Castagno, 2008; Gay, 2000; Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004; Hawkesworth, 1997; Madrid, 2004). These and other studies have sought to make clear the extent to which a difference in position within these categories allows some groups continued privilege at the expense of others; for example, how Whiteness aligns with a specific lived experience and understanding, that when used as the norm, systematically denies and devalues other racial/ethnic experiences.

Social class remains an area in which difference of culture and lifestyle allows ethnocentric judgment; that is, a lower social class standing is a justifiable position for derision (Abramowitz, 1996; Gans, 1995; Gilens, 2004; Hancock, 2004; Lister, 2004), in part because to be lower class may denote a personal lack of merit, motivation, and/or capacity (Murray, 1984). These assumptions carry racist and sexist notions as well (Hill Collins, 2005; O'Connor, 2001; Thomas, 1994), further mudding the ability to "see" social class as a means to "Other" individuals. Regardless, this study argues for and presents data that faculty, intentionally or not, Other the working-class student by focusing on the deficiencies of the student's social class background as explanation for the difficulties encountered in higher education. The hesitancy and lack of reflection by participants, regarding class-based pedagogy and practices, reflect a middle-class privilege, further justifying and demarcating the problem onto Others, in this case, the working-class student.

Recommendations

See and Understand Social Class

The "invisibility" of social class, as an aspect of identity and a basis for culture (Bettie, 2003; Linkon, 1999), must be addressed. In regards to this study, the findings illustrate that social class is an area that faculty members are uncertain about; they do and don't see social class; and they are resistant or hesitant to "see" social class because of assumptions about what social class standing infers about the individual. When they do see the markers and consequences of social class, they are unwilling, unable, or simply confused about how to actually "read" what this means. Faculty, particularly those who do not have the class-consciousness that lower social class provides, do not have a context by which to

"read" or understand the implications and significance of class for the individual. The individual in this case is not only the working-class student, but the faculty member as well. The larger question of how an organization or institution, such as higher education, may reflect a classed-culture, cannot be addressed, until we are more comfortable acknowledging and talking about class.

The American dream of a class-less society, reflecting hard-work, and merit, is a falsehood that has detrimental, disrespectful, and dangerous consequences. The literature regarding working-class students shows that social class has influenced their experience, generally in negative terms. So why aren't we talking about social class? Why is social class "invisible" when it so clearly makes a difference in how we negotiate, perceive, and experience higher education? These questions must be asked by all those who claim higher education is a means of transformation, growth, and mobility. These are not new questions (Nesbit, 2005; Tokarczyk, 2004) but they still important, because they have not been fully addressed. Until these questions are asked, and addressed, social class remains an "invisible" but nonetheless powerful tool by which education maintains and perpetuates larger patterns of social inequality.

Making social class visible is the first and most important recommendation coming from this study. Until we talk about social class, we cannot more adequately discuss the "invisibility" of being working-class, as framed against the "visible" norm of being middle-class. We will continue to struggle with what we see, but do not understand. This study found that faculty members tended to focus on the cultural capital of working-class students as deficient, which is classist because such assumptions about what constitutes appropriate or

“good” understanding and experience are aligned with a middle-class understanding. Class influences the manner of capital available and encouraged, and more importantly, how such capital is (de)valued depending upon one’s personal class-location, and too, upon the social context that may reflect a particular classed understanding and preference. Additionally, as colleges seeks to illustrate their worth and value, via increased student completion rates, social class, as a constructed barrier and challenge for working-class students must be identified, articulated, and addressed. Thus, in an ethical and just call for limiting classist assumptions that further disadvantage working-class students, and as a pragmatic and practical initiative to increase student completion rates, the following recommendation are provided:

- Faculty must consider social class, as it influences and reflects their own classed-based personal identity and culture, as well as that of their student population.
- Within the larger culture of higher education, social class must be framed as a variable within the experience, not only for students, but also additionally as it influences educational policy, procedures, and expectations.
- Social class must be acknowledged as embodying both personal and cultural parameters; as such it moves from being an "impolite" topic associated with deficiency to what it really is: a "veil" by which individuals see, experience, and interpret the world.
- Faculty must reexamine assumptions regarding the role of higher education and individual change. Specifically, faculty must reflect on the extent these assumptions articulate classist expectations.

- Utilize and expand multicultural models of development and difference into professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, which acknowledges class as culture, reflected in the teacher, the student, the classroom, and the institution.
- Within institutional planning and effectiveness departments, initiate a process by which social class is identified and tracked, both for faculty/administrators and the student population.
- Seek within the college individuals who identify as working-class to lead and promote professional development opportunities regarding issues of social class.
- Embrace and acknowledge community organizations that explicitly address issues of social class, as a means to form relationships that cross institutional types and missions.
- Initiative faculty dialogue regarding classroom management, policies and procedures that may inadvertently present class-based challenges and barriers, such as attendance policies that do not allow flexibility for the working-class student.

Acknowledge and Value the Working-Class

In this study, faculty was found to perceive working-class students as struggling. These struggles were framed as evolving from a difficult and/or different economic status that did not align with higher education. The struggles were also framed as a result of being working-class. Working-class became the struggle; conversely, the culture of higher education, as portrayed in participant comments and representing a middle-class experience was not acknowledged. The point being that one does not see how the membership within

class categories influence one's life unless one's membership is viewed as different or inferior to the supposed dominate norm. Norms are an aspect of culture, and the culture of higher education embraces and reflects in particular, characteristics of the middle-class (Green, 2003; Reay, David & Ball, 2001), thus ensuring that any group that is different becomes non-normative and as previously discussed, the Other.

An easy, but prejudiced, perspective could argue simply that working-class students do not have the appropriate understanding by which to maneuver, negotiate, and subsequently feel comfortable in higher education, and subsequently "must learn higher education." However, it is important to consider that faculty assumptions of valued understanding, identity, language, and interaction reflect a middle-class experience, and that the attainment of cultural capital, i.e., how to do college, it is further assumed to be in the best interest of the student. Conversely, an assumption that assimilation into middle class culture is appropriate reflects a devaluing of working-class culture.

- This consideration must entail a critique of how social class constitutes and creates a "struggle" reflective of the context and culture in which it occurs.
- Faculty must consider that the expectations of what it takes to succeed in college are counter to the previous socialization and culture of the working-class individual.
- Faculty must consider that the expectations of higher education reflect a middle-class bias towards teaching and learning.
- Institutions of higher education should consider the extent to which norms and values of the college may be modified to better acknowledge and support the working-class student.

Summary

This study explored the perceptions of community college faculty members regarding working-class students, and sought to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within these perceptions. These perceptions can be organized into the following four categories: social class is seen but not understood, working-class is defined by struggles, working-class students must learn college, and working-class students should transform via higher education. These perceptions indicate the following theoretical-based assumptions then about working-class students: the working-class is dysfunctional, college is a means by which to challenge/change social class, and working-class culture is (un)acknowledged and (de)valued.

Future Studies

Ten community faculty members at an urban community college were interviewed for this study; consequently the findings and interpretations must be understood in a particular context. First, this is a small sample of faculty, and all faculty work at the same community college. A larger sample across various community colleges may yield variations in the findings. Too, the specific context of a community college reflects a specific understanding and experience with the issue of social class. Community colleges are more likely than four-year universities to have a large proportion of working-class students. As such, faculty members' understandings of students' struggles, and particularly as that relates to understandings of working-class students, may then reflect a particular "type" of student and student struggle. This is assumed to vary for other types of higher educational institutions that may have a more varied classed student population. Assumptions of

working-class students may be more "invisible" in a student population where there are fewer working-class students. Subsequently, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted across various community colleges, using a larger sample, and too that a similar study extend to four-year colleges and universities, in order to understand the extent to which working-class students at these higher education institutions are perceived.

An additional area of consideration should inquire as to how ideas of social class are/are not acknowledged within college initiatives aimed at student success. For example, first-generation college students, by default definition, reflect aspects of a working-class identity and culture. The extent to which a first-generation college student program or initiative acknowledges the class-basis of this experience may influence the degree of success said program/initiative will have with retention and graduation rates. A final recommendation for further study regards the larger culture of higher education; that is, to what extent are policies, programming, values, and norms reflective of class-based assumptions, and subsequent classist practices. Such a study may entail the analysis of college documents and interviews with administrators.

Parting Comments

Social class, like many socially constructed categories, reflects and influences identity, interaction, culture, life experiences, and life choices. It cannot remain invisible, nor can it be an "impolite" subject; to deny that it exists or that it matters, further insults those for whom a devalued class status is readily apparent. Rather than social class of Others being the object of study, it is imperative for researchers and practitioners in higher education to reflect upon how their own classed location has provided a specific understanding and

experience with higher education. Class-based understanding and experience are not inherently wrong or "bad"; it only becomes dysfunctional when class-based assumptions embedded with these understandings and experiences extend to perceptions and interactions with others. That is, as with many aspects of human interaction, using one's personal understandings as a means to understand of others becomes fraught with potential for prejudice and discrimination.

The first step in ensuring that "difference" can be respected requires that we first talk about social class, as it creates difference; not just for others, for ourselves. Secondly, we must consider how we define and evaluate said differences, and what this means for how individuals, particularly working-class students, experience education. Faculty must meet and acknowledge where students come from and where they are, before they can know how to help them on their continued educational journey. Social class matters (hooks, 2000), but how it matters depends upon the ability to see it and understand it, in one's self, and others, and to respect rather than degenerate the difference it means in our lives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB SUBMISSION

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Date Submitted:** October 1, 2012 1a. **Revised Date:** _____
2. **Title of Project:** *Class -Based Frameworks and Assumptions in* 3. *Community College Faculty Perceptions of Working-Class Students* 4.
5. **Principal Investigator:** *Terina R. Lathe*
6. **Department:** *Leadership, Policy and Adult and Higher Education*
7. **Campus Box Number:** _____
8. **Email:** *Terina.lathe@cpcc.edu*
9. **Phone Number:** *980-253-5367*
10. **Fax Number:** _____
11. **Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission:** *Susan J. Bracken; susan_bracken@ncsu.edu*
12. **Source of Funding? (required information):** *Self*
13. **Is this research receiving federal funding?:** *No*
14. **If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number:**_____
15. RANK: ☐ Faculty X Student: ☐Undergraduate; ☐ Masters; or ☐PhD X Other (specify): *Ed.D.*

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Terina R. Lathe	_____ *	*November 20, 2012*
(typed/printed name)	(signature)	(date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the ***principal investigator of record****.*

Faculty Sponsor:

Susan J. Bracken	_____ *	*November 20, 2012*

(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

***Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.**

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: debra_paxton@ncsu.edu or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). **Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.**

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For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

☐ Exempt ☐ Approved ☐ Approved pending modifications ☐ Table

Expedited Review Category: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8a ☐ 8b ☐ 8c

Reviewer Name Signature Date

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to better understand how community college faculty perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. This study utilizes qualitative research methods as a means to explore the experience of working-class students in higher education, via a narrative study of faculty perceptions regarding working-class students. Poststructuralism provides the general theoretical framework, and the literature based descriptions of classed educational experiences offer a tentative partial pre-coding structure by which the findings will be analyzed and reported.

Larger cultural norms and values indicate an assumption that social class boundaries are fluid, allowing individuals, with sufficient skill, effort, and motivation, to move from a lower social class standing to a higher, and more valued classed position (Mantsios, 1995). These norms and values reflect an ideology that asserts support for upward mobility via change at the individual level, such as perseverance and hard work (Hochschild, 1995). Such individual change is supposedly available via higher education. Yet, said individual change is also a classed phenomenon, as it occurs within a classed context and culture. Working-class individuals' experience with higher education varies as a result of a working-class background, identity, and culture, in contrast to a system that reflects, practices, and creates a different classed experience.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1) How do community college faculty members perceive working-class students?
2) How class-based frameworks and assumptions are present in community college faculty members' perception of working-class students?

This study acknowledges and incorporates the strengths and characteristics of a qualitative study. Qualitative research allows for the understanding that meaning is socially constructed via a social context and social interaction (Merriam, 1998). Unlike quantitative research, which argues for an objective reality that can be captured, a qualitative approach does not assert a single, authoritative understanding (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative research's acknowledgement of multiple understandings and an appreciation of reality as socially constructed and negotiated (Baptiste, 2001) align with my ethical, epistemological, and theoretical beliefs.

This study utilizes narrative inquiry as the methodology by which data is recognized, valued, and later, deconstructed. Narrative inquiry is a sociolinguistic approach for analyzing text that comprises a story (Riessman, 1993), with an understanding that these stories are the means by which self and experiences are given meaning (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1991). Narrative inquiry allows that rhetoric, in the form of stories, life histories, graffiti, testimonies, etc., illustrates one's knowing of the world and may describe how one constructs an understanding of the world via personal experience and negotiation (Patton, 2002). Specific to this study, I seek to explore the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students.

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

This research study encompasses my dissertation requirement for attaining an Ed.D degree.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?
   Estimates or ranges are acceptable. Be aware that if you recruit over 10% more participants than originally requested, you will need to submit a request to modify your recruitment numbers.

Ten to fifteen participants from Central Piedmont Community College (Charlotte, NC) will be selected to engage in two 1-hour interviews. Participants will be full-time curriculum instructors situated at the Central Campus.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

This study incorporates purposeful sampling, as defined by Patton (2002), for I choose to select "information rich cases" to study in greater depth the degree to which faculty stories of experiences with working-class students reflect classed assumptions (p. 230). Faculty, then, become my unit of analysis.Additionally, I suspect that as I begin the recruitment process, participants, given the nature of the study, will be those faculty members who may have a predisposition to reflective practices and concern for pedagogical issues. To this extent, my sample may best represent an intensity sampling, in that the faculty experiences represent "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely" (Patton, 2002, p. 234). Participants will be recruited via an invitation to participate that will be posted in Central Piedmont Community College's faculty and staff newsletter.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

Participants will be recruited from Central Piedmont Community College, which has historically served a large proportion of working-class individuals, and currently serves approximately 70,000 individuals each year. The college is located in Charlotte, North Carolina, and provides a range of services across several campuses. Participants will be full-time curriculum faculty members stationed at the largest campus, Central Campus. The justification for selecting Central Campus is that it houses the largest number of full-time faculty, and as well, serves the largest number of students. Full-time curriculum faculty are the target sample, in order to best represent individuals most aligned with and cognizant of the larger culture of the college, and too, because the literature states that the majority of classes offered at the community college level are taught by full-time faculty. It is expected that recruited participants will encompass characteristics and responsibilities required by the college for employment as instructors, which include the following: experience with online and ELearning technology, minimum annual professional development of 20 approved hours, an emphasis upon teaching and learning, a commitment to serve the college through committee membership, a minimum number of office hours dedicated to student advising and consultation, and continued competency in the field or discipline. Faculty will be recruited by an invitation made available through the school newsletter (see Appendix B). The recruiting materials will explain the purpose of the study, and outline the criteria by which participants are chosen. Ten to fifteen participants will be selected in accordance with the criteria outlined in the recruitment materials. Each participant will engage in two separate one-hour interviews, resulting in a minimum of twenty contact

hours.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

The target population is full-time community college faculty. The selection process as outlined above excludes other community college employees, such as adjunct faculty, administrators, and staff.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

It is probable that I will have prior experiences and relationships with some of the participants, given that I am also a full-time curriculum faculty member (sociology). The advantages of being employed at the same educational institution as the participants include my contacts within the various departments and divisions, and my own understanding of past and present college-wide policies and initiatives that may form a backdrop by which faculty share their experiences. I intend to clearly articulate in my notes the extent to which these previous relationships and understanding influences my interpretation of the data, thereby meeting a goal of transparency in the data analysis section of this study. Additionally I acknowledge that my role at the school does and will influence the study, and I will seek to articulate and examine that relationship within the study. I will not interview any participant with whom I have had any past or potentially future supervisory relationship, in order to deter bias and/or intimidation in regards to participation.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- ☐ minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- ☐ fetuses
- ☐ pregnant women
- ☐ persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- ☐ persons with physical disabilities
- ☐ economically or educationally disadvantaged
- ☐ prisoners
- ☐ elderly
- ☐ students from a class taught by principal investigator
- ☐ other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the

research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

A) CPCC faculty will be invited to participate via recruitment materials in the school newspaper. Ten to fifteen full-time faculty members will be selected to engage in two 1-hour interviews. Each participant will be informed that participation is voluntary, and that she/he may elect to end their participation at any time. Each participant will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form prior to participating in the initial interview. This informed consent form is provided as Attachment C.

B) Participants will be informed that I am conducting this study to complete the doctoral dissertation requirements of my Ed.D program at North Carolina State University. Identities of participants will not be revealed to any administrators, faculty, staff, or students at CPCC. If a criminal act or a situation in which an individual's safety may be at risk, IRB reporting protocols will be followed.

C) Each participant will have assigned to him or her a pseudonym for the purposes of this study in order to protect privacy. The identity of the participants will only be known to me.

D) Interviews will be conducted at the participant's preferred location. Each interview will be audio-recorded on cassette tapes. I will be the sole transcriber of these tapes. Tapes will be stored in a locked drawer in my office at work. Once a tape has been transcribed, it will be destroyed. Transcriptions will not contain names of individual participants, but will instead be identified by assigned pseudonym. Transcriptions will be viewed by me, and possibly by my faculty advisor, Dr. Susan Bracken, who chairs my doctoral dissertation committee and oversees my research methodology. Transcription files will be stored on my personal laptop computer, which requires a password for access.

E) As part of this narrative study, each participant will be asked to share perceptions of working-class students in the initial interview. A copy of the loosely structured interview process is attached as Appendix D. In the second interview, participants will be provided the opportunity to review my analysis of their perceptions. This analysis will describe my understanding of their comments, and faculty will be provided the opportunity to elaborate or react to the data. Participates will also be encouraged to provide additional examples or stories as a means of clarification. The time between the first and second interview should not exceed four weeks.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

Participants will be asked to complete two interviews, over a period of no more than four weeks, with each interview lasting approximately one hour.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (psychological, social, physical, financial, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

This study explores issues of social class, and within the interview guide, participants are asked to share thoughts regarding their place of employment, higher education, and students. Selected participants will be full-time curriculum faculty members of a community college that specifically serves historically lower social class student populations. These characteristics of the interview guide, and the context/location of the research may possibly be perceived as risk factors by participants. For example,

participants may be concerned that their participation will become a liability for their employment at the college.

Because this study asks for voluntary participation, and participants' identity is protected by the use of pseudonyms, I do not anticipate physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other risks. Approximately 60 full-time faculty members are currently located at the Central Campus. Given this large number by which the participants are selected, it is additionally unlikely that participants' identity can be readily ascertained. Participants may also withdraw from the study at any time.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

As discussed above, the issue of social class, in regards to the participants and the students with whom they have contact, are an integral aspect of this study. Faculty may consider this information to be personal and/or sensitive, and likewise be concerned that findings from the study could be linked back to them individually, and thus impair their reputation or standing at the college.

a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

The following steps will be taken to minimize these risks:

A) Faculty will be fully informed of these possible risks via the informed consent form, and allowed to make a decision at that point as to whether to continue participation in the study.
B) Faculty will be reminded that at any point in the study, they may withdraw their participation.
C) Faculty will not be identified in the study, and personal characteristics (i.e., subject taught, gender, age, etc.) will not be identifiable within the study.
D) Although the analysis will include individual responses, the final report of findings will focus on the cumulative findings of the interviews, using theoretical frameworks as a means of deconstructing the data.
E) The final report will entail the reconstruction of data into three stories, again based upon theoretical frameworks, and NOT individual responses or understanding.

3. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

No

4. How will data be recorded and stored?

Each interview will be audio-recorded on cassette tapes. I will be the sole transcriber of these tapes. Tapes will be stored in a locked drawer in my office at work. Once a tape has been transcribed, it will be destroyed. Transcriptions will not contain names of individual participants, but will instead be identified by assigned pseudonym. Transcriptions will be viewed by me, and possibly by my faculty advisor, Dr. Susan Bracken, who chairs my doctoral dissertation committee and oversees my research methodology. Transcription files will be stored on my personal laptop computer, which requires a password for access.

a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and only I will know their identities.

b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

The analysis of participant responses will entail both aggregate and individual responses. Initially, individual responses will be analyzed to identify class-based frameworks and assumptions. However, the final report will be presented as three different stories, with each story representative of a particular theoretical framework, as determined in the individual perceptions of participants. These individual perceptions cannot be used to identify a specific participant. Rather, the perceptions will be tagged and understood as reflecting theoretical frameworks and assumptions, not individuals.

5. If audio or video recordings are collected, will you retain or destroy the recordings? How will recordings be stored during the project and after, as per your destruction/retention plans?

Audio recordings will be destroyed upon the transcription. Recordings will be stored in a locked drawer in my office, which is also locked when I am absent.

6. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

The interview process provides opportunity to reflect upon teaching and education, and as such, may provide opportunity for individual growth and insight. However, there will be no compensation for participants. The knowledge and insight gained from the study's findings concerning the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions in community college faculty perceptions of working-class students may benefit college administration and faculty in providing a more supportive environment for the working-class student population.

F. COMPENSATION

Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

1. Describe compensation

None.

2. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.
3. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

NA

G COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

NA

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

Only I and possibly my advisor/dissertation committee chair, Dr. Susan J. Bracken.

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project?

No

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? *NA*

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.

2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

The following advertisement will be placed in CPCC's faculty and staff newsletter.

Participants are currently being recruited to participate in a doctoral study on full-time community college faculty perceptions of working-class students. Participants must be full-time curriculum faculty situated at Central Campus. Selected participants will engage in two 1-hour interviews with the researcher, conducted in the preferred location of the participant, over a period of one month. Due to financial and ethical considerations, participants will not be compensated by monetary or other material assets. To express interest in participating, or to get additional information, please contact Terina R. Lathe, at 704-330-4856 or via email at terina.lathe@cpcc.edu.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH
This form is valid from November 19, 2012 through November 19, 2013

Title of Study Class -Based Frameworks and Assumptions in Community College Faculty Perceptions of Working-Class Students

Principal Investigator Terina R. Lathe Faculty Sponsor (if applicable) Dr. Susan J. Bracken

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study was to better understand how community college faculty perceive working-class students, and to make visible the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions within those perceptions. A significant amount of research documents that working-class students are presented with various challenges and barriers, as they attempt to attain higher education. This study seeks to look at how faculty perceives working-class students, with the goal of better understanding the experience of working-class students. Insight into the presence of class-based frameworks and assumptions may ultimately lead to greater awareness and acknowledgement of working-class students' experiences.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in two 1-hour interviews. These interviews will be audio-recorded. The initial interview will ask you to share your perceptions of working-class students. In the second interview, I will provide to you my initial interpretation and analysis of your perceptions. Interviews will be conducted at a place convenient to you.

Risks
This study explores issues of social class, and within the interview guide, you will be asked to share thoughts regarding your place of employment, higher education, and students. You may consider this information to be personal and/or sensitive, and likewise be concerned that findings from the study could be linked back to you individually, and thus impair your reputation or standing at the college.
To minimize these risks, please know that all participants' identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. Individual traits and characteristics such as gender, age, and discipline taught will not be identifiable within the study. Although analysis will contain individual responses, the final report of findings will focus on the cumulative findings of the interviews, using theoretical frameworks as a means of deconstructing the data. The final report will entail the reconstruction of data within theoretical-based stories of social class perceptions.

Benefits

Individual benefits include the opportunity to reflect upon teaching and students, during the interview process. For some faculty, this may provide opportunity for personal insight and growth.

Higher education may benefit from being challenged to examine the extent to which class-based frameworks and assumptions are present in faculty members' perception of working-class students. Research on working-class students demonstrates various cultural, economic, and social barriers may prevent, discourage, and/or limit entrance into or attainment of higher education. Increased understanding of how faculty perceives working-class students is the first step in considering what modifications are necessary to provide a more encouraging and supportive learning environment for working-class students.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked drawer, in my work office. Reports about the research will include direct quotes from interviews, so some of your colleagues may recognize quotes from you. Audio recordings will be destroyed upon transcription. Respondent identities will not be recorded; instead, pseudonyms will be assigned. However, if this study's data collection should discover experiences that may be criminal or that threaten the safety or well-being of any participants, it may be necessary to report this behavior to relevant authorities.

Compensation

You will not receive anything for participating.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Terina R Lathe, at Terina.lathe@cpcc.edu, or at 980-253-5367/

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent to Participate

"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Subject's signature_____ **Date** _____
Investigator's signature_____ **Date** _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE (INTITIAL INTERVIEW)

Pseudonym:

Date:

Interviewer:

Time:

Place of Interview:

Introductions: Thank you so much for agreeing to be a part of this study. I know you are busy, and I appreciate that you have taken time out of your day to meet with me. As you know, this study is looking at community college faculty perceptions of working-class students. The questions I'll be asking in the interview are meant to help me understand how you, as a community college faculty member, perceive working-class students.

Questions:

1. To start this interview, I would like to know more about you-
    a. What discipline do you teach in?
        What are your teaching and professional responsibilities?
        How did you come to a career in academics?
    b. How do you feel about working at a community college?
    c. What is it like, to teach at a community college?
2. What are the students like?

a. Can you walk me through a week of your work, here at the college?

b. Can you tell me about your own educational experiences?

c. What are the students like here?

3. So this study is about perceptions of working-class students. Specifically, I am interested in how you see working-class students.

a. To start then, how would you define working-class?

b. Do you use other terms rather than working-class?

-Can you define or distinguish these other terms?

*For the purpose of this study, I am going to use working-class.

c. How can you tell if a student is working-class?

d. How would you describe your interactions with working-class students?

e. What are the challenges associated with working-class students?

f. What are the benefits associated with working-class students?

g. Can you share an experience with me that helps illustrate your interactions with working-class students? Please do not use names or other information that could specifically identify an individual.

h. Do you believe you act differently with working-class students?

Please tell me more.

4. This next part of the interview is to help me connect your experiences and thoughts of working-class students back to higher education, in general.

a. What do you think is the purpose of higher education?

b. How does that purpose vary for working-class students?

c. How do you think working-class students experience higher education?

d. How do you influence this experience?

5. Okay, that is it! Again, I appreciate your help and support. I will begin analysis of the initial interviews shortly, and within a week, I will contact you to schedule the second meeting, in which I'll share my first findings, and ask for your feedback and thoughts. Before we stop, though, do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE (SECOND INTERVIEW)

Pseudonym:

Date:

Interviewer:

Time:

Place of Interview:

Introductions:
Thank you again for agreeing to meet with me. The purpose of this second interview is to clarify some of your responses to make sure I understand your perceptions of working-class students.

1. What are your thoughts about social inequality?

   --How does this relate to higher education?

2. In general, how do you think social class influences who a person is and how they make life choices?

   --Choices and experiences with school?

3. More generally, how do you think a person's education (or lack of it) shapes their status in society?

   --Their life experiences?

4. When you think of working class students -- how do you think their being working class might influence them?

   --Their college life?

5. Is there anything about your class that you can think of that might stand out to a working class student differently than other students?

   --if so, how?

6. How do you think a working-class student perceives or experiences your class?

7. Going back to the issue of social inequality...do you perceive your role as an instructor as having any influence on social equality?

   --if so, how?

   --if not, why?