

EXAMINING SOCIAL CLASS PRIVILEGE AND  
PERCEIVED CAREER OPTIONS IN ADOLESCENT WHITE  
WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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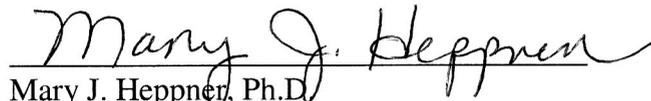
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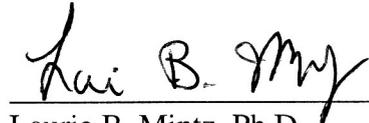
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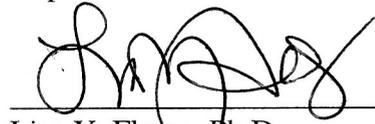
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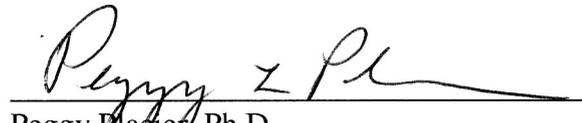
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Social Class Worldview on adolescent women's perceived career options. This investigation into the lived experiences of these young women was conducted via qualitative methods, and specifically a modified Grounded Theory procedure. The framework for approaching each phase of the research was constructivist and interpretivist. Interviews were conducted with 10 high school-age economically privileged white women.

The "Model of Contextual Privilege and Career Selection in Adolescent White Women" emerged from the interviews. This model explains the overall process whereby privileged adolescent young women take into account their beliefs about achievement, their experiences, messages from others, and their social class worldview in order to develop a list of occupational possibilities. The Model incorporates four major categorical groups that emerged from the data: 1) Social Class Worldview, 2) Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations, 3) Exposure, and 4) Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria. A total of 29 saturated categories and sub-categories appear in the final model. Overall, the findings suggest that the perception of career options, in a privileged context, is the result of a very complicated interplay of cognitive, emotional, and experiential factors.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*“Class experience is deeply rooted, retained and carried through life rather than left behind...In this sense it is more like a foot that carries us forward than a footprint which marks a past presence” (Mahony & Zmroczek, 1997, p. 4).*

In our society, it is easy to identify social classes. From birth, we have been taught, both subtly and overtly, where we belong in the American class system, and what characteristics define those classes. There are a number of ways to place an individual in his/her respective social class, and one of the most significant means of doing this is through the individual's occupation or career. Thus, the process of choosing an occupation becomes unavoidably linked to one's social class, generally through either the aspiration to attain a higher social class, or to at least maintain an existing social class. This opportunity for “social mobility” permeates American culture, teaching individuals from an early age that a system of meritocracy is very much alive and well in the United States, and that one can always escape or transcend his/her social class of origin. This message is potentially damaging to individuals on both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum: For individuals from lower social class backgrounds, the “Myth of Meritocracy” is often just that—a myth. Systemic barriers may prohibit them from realizing their visions of the American dream that are so deeply rooted in our society's subconscious. And for individuals of higher social class backgrounds, the promise of social mobility can be problematic as well. The occupational possibilities that enable upper-class individuals to earn more than their family of origin, and hence move up the economic hierarchy, are scanty at best. Further solidifying these systemic and societal

barriers to social mobility are psychological factors as well—individuals possess a class identity that has been firmly established, and which is often difficult for individuals of low *or* high social class backgrounds to leave behind. And so it is often the case that individuals choose from a narrow range of occupations that allow them to rest comfortably on their “rung” of origin, and avoid the discomfort of moving upwards or downwards along the social class ladder. The result is a society with a static social class hierarchy, and one in which individuals often remain in occupational groups that signify their social class of origin. The impact of social class on career choice is thus impossible to deny, and has led researchers to describe the significance of social class within career development, stating, “If one were permitted only a single variable with which to predict an individual’s occupational status, it would surely be the socioeconomic status of the individual’s family” (Schulenberg, Vondracek, and Crouter, 1984, p. 130). At both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, an individual’s social class of origin is of great and lasting importance to ultimate career selection.

While the impact of social class on career is salient throughout the lifespan, it is a particularly crucial factor to examine in the career development of adolescents. This is because it incorporates the individual’s *awareness* of his/her position in an economic hierarchy (Liu, Ali, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004). It emphasizes the sense of belonging to a particular social group, and adolescents possess an intensified need to belong to a group and maintain a source of identity among their peers (Rice, 1999). At the cusp of their career development process, adolescents therefore become aware of their place in society’s social class hierarchy, and begin forming a mental list of the occupations that will enable them to achieve the social class standing to which they aspire

or wish to maintain. High school students of all backgrounds are often deprived of the opportunity to consider a number of career options in which they could become successful and fulfilled, because of their own and others' perceptions of what may be appropriate for them given their social class. The career options may be even further limited for adolescent *girls* who may receive messages regarding not only class-appropriate careers, but gender-appropriate careers as well.

Long term, these limited options have the potential to affect the adolescent's ultimate psychological health and well-being. An incongruent career choice, resulting from limited options, can produce stress in one's chosen career. And when viewing occupational development from a holistic perspective, career strain may be related to psychological distress (Multon, Heppner, Gysbers, Zook, & Ellis-Kalton, 2001). Symptoms of distress may not occur until an individual is well into their chosen profession, which is why it is all the more vital to examine career selection at its beginning—in adolescence.

Despite the seeming importance of social class and socioeconomic status in the development of career goals, these are factors that have not been emphasized in the counseling psychology literature on career development. Whiston and Keller's recent review article (2004) on the role of family background in career development highlights the extent to which social class has been omitted from the counseling literature. With some rare exceptions, social class has not been a variable of interest in the career development literature over the past twenty years. Other disciplines, however, have attended to social class issues in the study of career development and academic achievement. Sociology and education, in particular, have devoted much research

attention to the study of occupational barriers for adolescents of lower social class backgrounds. This line of research is extraordinarily important and necessary from a social justice perspective, as it seeks to maximize the limited career options that many of these lower social class adolescents face. Yet the perception of limited career options is an issue that spans class boundaries, and can even include adolescents from middle to upper class backgrounds as well. While there are significantly fewer (if any) external barriers to career development for these individuals, the internal pressure to conform to a given social class may also be limiting and problematic for these economically privileged adolescents. Their range of possible occupations is likely to include a number of high-prestige careers that lower social class adolescents may not even consider. Yet this opportunity for prestige still limits them to a narrow slice of careers that are “acceptable” or appropriate.

If looking to examine the relationship of class and career from a gendered context, the literature is even more sparse. In general, the available literature on women’s career development is extensive, and has changed the way psychology approaches women and career. Pivotal figures like Nancy Betz, Louise Fitzgerald, and Lenore Harmon, to name a few, have brought attention to such important issues as sex segregation, harassment in the workplace, and women’s self-efficacy beliefs about career. The work done by these women in addition to so many others is invaluable to our field. Yet, much of this research focuses on *adult* women, or at least college women. And while a growing body of literature has examined the career aspirations of young girls and adolescents, there still remains work to be done on the degree to which social class plays a role in the process of career selection in the lives of *privileged* young women.

In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the unique issues faced by this population, and hence achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the intersection between class and career choice, this qualitative study takes an in-depth look at social class perceptions and career aspirations within a sample of young women from financially privileged social class backgrounds. And while race is not the primary construct of interest in this study, it is nonetheless important to clarify that this study does focus on the experience of privileged *white* women, resulting in a context that is privileged, female, adolescent, and white.

*Privileged Adolescent Women...Who cares?*

My interest in the influence of social class on the career paths of economically privileged adolescents, while important to me, does not come without its share of criticism. The question of “Who cares?” is one I have been asked to answer since beginning this line of research four years ago. Peers and colleagues are at first intrigued by the study of social class and its implications for career, but the interest and smiles on their faces often begin to wane when I describe my target population. The literature supports their doubt, and calls into question the necessity of studying this particular demographic group. When scholars identify the need for more research in the area of social class and career, privileged adolescents are seldom where they first direct their attention. But after all, why should they? It has been shown that higher social class adolescents are guided towards coursework and occupations that give them an enhanced opportunity for economic success (Hemmings, 2004). Additionally, adolescents from higher social class backgrounds often possess the luxury of choosing a career based on interest and fulfillment, rather than economic necessity (Omvig & Thomas, 1974). Why

then, should research and resources focus on this population that seems destined to maintain their social class privilege? These are all valid questions, and ones that I feel it is very important to address.

In one respect, to study a group of upper class young women is to study the general concept of privilege. It is important to study socioeconomic privilege for the same reasons it is important to study white privilege or heterosexual privilege, for example. It is through studying and understanding privilege that we also come to understand oppression (Anderson & Middleton, 2005). Research like this current study cannot solve the class stratification of careers; the external barriers faced by the working-class are too plentiful, and too established. However, by gaining information and insight into what psychological mechanisms make certain occupations solely the territory of the upper-class, we can hopefully work towards eradicating some of the class boundaries that exist in the process of career selection. Furthermore, if our research ignores an entire demographic group, we are in essence ignoring one piece of the socioeconomic puzzle. Neglecting the study of social privilege is not, however, unique to counseling psychology. Historically, this has been the case in other disciplines as well, although researchers from other fields such as sociology and women's studies have begun to identify the need to examine social class more broadly. In a study of adolescent girls and class perceptions, one author states that in sociology the focus has overwhelmingly been on the experience of working-class girls, which is not sufficient to a complete study of social class (Frazer, 1988). Researchers Zmroczek and Mahoney echo this sentiment in their own work with women and the gendered social class experience. In their more recent work on women and social class, they state, "...we became increasingly aware of

the need to...include the contributions of women from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. In learning how women from working-class backgrounds felt about [class], we knew we had only exposed part of the story” (Zmroczek & Mahoney, 1997, p. 2). Likewise, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the effects of social class on career development, both extremes are important, as well as the middle class (Heppner & Scott, 2004). While adolescents from higher social class backgrounds certainly possess a number of privileges and supports, their experiences are important to study and examine if we are to gain a complete picture of the effects of social class on career development.

Another rationale for studying economically privileged adolescents requires a reexamination of the prevailing conceptualization of career options. In general, literature states that adolescents from a higher social class background aspire to a more prestigious pool of possible occupations than adolescents from lower social class backgrounds (Gottfredson, 1981; Langston, 2001; Poole & Cooney, 1985). This fact is represented in the literature as one of many privileges enjoyed by adolescents who come from high social class backgrounds. But while these adolescents may possess a circumscribed (Gottfredson, 1981) list of occupations that leans towards the prestigious, that list is still limited. Our society’s social class hierarchy limits economically privileged adolescents to a group of career options that is ultimately prohibitive, and results in potentially depriving these adolescents from making career decisions without the added pressure of achieving substantial financial success. The potential psychological effects of such limited choices exist for individuals of high as well as low social class backgrounds, and deserve the attention of scholars and research. And in addition to these psychological factors, the possible implications of limiting career options are far-reaching for our

society as a whole—by limiting privileged adolescents to careers which maintain that privilege, we also maintain a social class hierarchy where it is often the case that the rich stay rich, and the poor stay poor.

If we are to gain a full picture of the mechanisms through which social class considerations guide the career development of adolescents, it is important to study the entire social class ladder, including the top. Frances Maher, a professor of Women's Studies and a social class scholar, articulates this need in her own research, stating:

Structural arrangements create frames for all of us, upper class, working class, *and* middle class. They are always unequal, and they position us all in complex relations to the prevailing assumptions of class mobility...But their operations are not always predictable. (1999, p. 130)

Her words serve as a reminder that the class system in our country can work against us all, including members of the economically privileged class. The career choices of economically privileged adolescents are limited, because they are inextricably tied to class identity, class mobility, and the overall social class hierarchy of American society. The relationship between one's social class of origin and perceptions of class mobility may be complicated and case-specific, as Maher suggests, and thus it is crucial to study this link through methods that allow for the lived experiences of individuals to emerge. This qualitative study aims to accomplish just that, and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the career aspirations of upper-class adolescents are influenced by their social class of origin. Only in so doing can we also come to a better comprehension of the role career development plays in how or why adolescents often choose class-congruent occupations, and thus reinforce our society's overall system of class stratification.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Occupations and careers serve as reference groups and social identifiers, and while some are more well-known than others, most occupations make at least some statement about social class (Coser, 1994; Gottfredson, 1981). Because occupation is such a significant symbol of social class, it follows that individuals will take social class into account when reflecting on or ultimately choosing a given occupation. However, individuals do not only consider the social class that an occupation could provide for them in the future. The individual's *current* social class may also affect his/her choice to pursue a given career path. In other words, because of various social and educational supports and barriers, individuals from a lower social class may perceive different career options than individuals from a higher social class (Langston, 2001). And while social class background has the potential to influence multiple phases of the career development process (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996), this study is solely concerned with adolescents, and specifically young women.

#### Adolescents, Career Choice, and Social Class

Adolescence is a particularly pivotal time for career exploration and choice (Nurmi, 1991; Rice, 1999). As an adolescent begins considering various careers, social class background introduces external pressures, supports, and barriers related to career choice (Rice, 1999). Added to this is the adolescent's social class worldview and interpretation of socioeconomically appropriate careers, which may influence his/her perceived options (Gottfredson, 1981). And finally, depending on his/her cultural background and available resources, social mobility may seem more or less an option.

All these factors have a cumulative effect, impacting the individual's level of education, chosen and attained occupation, and ultimate social class status as an adult (Langston, 2001).

Yet how aware are adolescents of their social class, and how does this awareness affect career choices? Research suggests that adolescents do, in fact, have a fairly accurate impression of their social class. One study shows that children as young as 11 years old can provide reliable reports of their parents' socioeconomic status (SES) (West, Sweeting, & Speed, 2001), and another study found that children as young as 6 years old could categorize pictures of people and objects into upper, middle, and lower social classes (Tudor, 1971, cited in Liu et al., 2004). Furthermore, Lien, Friedstad, & Klepp (2001) found that there is relatively good agreement between adolescent and parent reports of SES, particularly when the adolescents are asked a few specific questions which may cue them to provide more detailed information.

Research has established that young people are aware of their social class, and it has also shown that social class affects adolescents in a number of important ways. These range from physical health factors (Goodman, 1999), to mental health factors (Waschbusch, Sellers, LeBlanc, & Kelley, 2003), to intellectual and academic performance (Croizet & Claire, 1998). And finally, literature does support that social class and SES affect adolescents' career development and career choices at both the internal and external level. Studies have demonstrated that an adolescent's social class may affect the types of careers and levels of education to which they aspire (Kelly, 1989; MacKay & Miller, 1982; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). One study showed that adolescents who believe that there are a variety of possible careers open to them, and

who also would consider a variety of careers, are likely to possess a number of characteristics, one of which is coming from a middle to high social class background (McDonald & Jessell, 1992). In addition, Cook, Church, Ajanaku, Shadish, Kim, & Cohen (1996) found that inner-city boys as young as the second grade have already developed ideas about what occupations are realistic for them. These boys, in comparison to boys from more privileged backgrounds, tended to report a larger gap between the careers they would like to pursue, and the careers they expect to enter (Cook et al., 1996).

The idea that an adolescent's awareness of social class can influence the occupation they choose to pursue is significant in itself. Yet social class and/or SES may also affect the number of careers that adolescents perceive as options at all (Cook et al., 1996; McDonald & Jessell, 1992). One study found that prestigious careers were seen as more "suitable" by adolescents from high social class backgrounds (Poole & Cooney, 1985), thereby making them more likely to ultimately choose such careers. This process of determining suitable or class-appropriate careers begins early in life, as demonstrated by one study of elementary-school children, where boys from higher social class backgrounds reported more prestigious career expectations than boys from low social class backgrounds (Malone & Shope, 1978). And this pattern extends into older adolescents and even post-college students, which lends support to the idea that the social class of origin continues to remain important throughout the lifespan. In one study on the factors motivating students to pursue law or business school, many of the participants stated their desire to provide for their future families, such as the financial ability to send

their children to private schools (Schleef, 2000). In order to fulfill such an economic goal, these students have already limited their potential list of occupations.

While it is fortunate that children, adolescents, and adults raised in economic privilege have the luxury of choosing from a pool of prestigious occupations that will allow them to maintain social privilege, it remains possible that they feel limited, and run the risk of feeling unfulfilled and psychologically distressed as a result of a mismatch between their interests/skills and their ultimate career choice, however prestigious it may be.

#### Career and Social Class in Counseling Psychology: Definitions, Theory, and Research

While the intersection of career and social class deserves much more attention in the counseling psychology literature, there are some researchers and theorists who have made significant contributions in this topic area. Particularly meaningful have been the number of career theories which take into account various sociocultural and demographic variables, and allow for the inclusion of social class as one of those potential variables of interest. In this section, I will highlight some of the literature and theoretical work conducted by counseling psychologists who study career development, and how social class may be conceptualized amidst these important vocational theories.

#### *Defining Socioeconomic Status, Social Class, and Social Class Worldview*

Liu and his colleagues (2004) posit that one reason for the few empirical articles dedicated to career and social class is the lack of a consistent definition of social class and SES. Often articles use the terms SES and social class interchangeably to refer to the same construct, which results in confusion and ambiguity (Liu et al., 2004). Therefore, it

is crucial to define the terms that will be used throughout this manuscript:

Socioeconomic Status, Social Class, and Social Class Worldview.

There is confusion particularly between the terms SES and Social Class. Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, and Wicker (1996) offer an extensive definition of social class that includes both objective and subjective indices. They include measures of occupational prestige, income level, and educational attainment, but also state that social class should incorporate an individual's subjective relationship to resources such as social power. In addition, they identify a psychological component to social class wherein an individual identifies with distinct "levels" of resources, prestige, and social power (Brown, et al., 1996). Liu and his colleagues (2004) categorize this all-encompassing definition into two different constructs: Socioeconomic Status and Social Class. They differentiate between these two terms based on the specific variables that are used when determining an individual's given place in an "economic hierarchy". Their definition of SES examines subjective indices such as prestige, lifestyle, and control of resources, while Social Class is determined by income, education level, and occupation (Liu et al., 2004). They also differentiate between these terms based on the perception of mobility. SES is a temporary state in which mobility is an option. Thus, individuals have the power to use their resources to move higher or lower in the economic hierarchy. Social class, on the other hand, includes an individual's *awareness* of his/her position in that economic hierarchy. In addition, that individual is also aware of others who do and do not occupy that same place in the hierarchy (Liu et al., 2004).

For the purposes of this proposal, both of these terms are important and will be used as defined by Liu et al. (2004). Social Class is a vital construct because it

emphasizes an individual's sense of belonging to a particular social group. This is especially crucial when examining adolescents, who possess an intensified need to belong to a group, and to maintain a source of identity among their peers (Rice, 1999). Social class may be one dimension on which adolescents achieve this identity. SES is also important to include, as it conveys the potential for social mobility. This, too, is significant in the study of adolescents. Some adolescents may experience classism or discrimination as a result of their social class, and thus may feel a need or desire to choose an occupation that can afford them a different lifestyle in the future. To achieve this, mobility within the economic hierarchy is vital.

For adolescents whose SES and social class are dependent upon their parents or caregivers, the concept of "social class worldview" becomes very important. Liu and his colleagues developed the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) which they define as, "the beliefs and attitudes that help the individual to understand the demands of one's economic culture, develop the behaviors necessary to meet the economic culture demands, and recognize how classism functions in one's life" (Liu et al., 2004, p. 9). This model distinguishes between three constructs: 1) the local environment which encourages an individual to maintain his/her current social class (homeostasis), 2) the lens through which an individual perceives economic cultural expectations and how to meet those expectations, and 3) classism, which may be categorized as upward, downward, lateral, or internalized (Liu et al., 2004).

Each of these three constructs has direct implications for adolescents and their career choices. In regards to homeostasis, the added pressure of "belonging" in adolescence may merely intensify the individual's need to pursue occupations that allow

for the maintenance of a particular social class, or the opportunity to move upward. An adolescent's "lens" is also significant, as their career choices may depend on their *perceptions*, whether accurate or inaccurate, of what is expected of them culturally and economically. And finally, an adolescent's experience of classism may directly impact his/her perception of possible careers. Overall, it is important to consider an adolescent's subjective perception of his/her existing social class, as well as the perceived pressures (or lack of pressures) to *attain* a given social class. Liu et al.'s Social Class Worldview Model (2004) incorporates these variables, and is an important construct in this current study.

#### *Career-Specific Theories in Counseling Psychology*

Despite the fact that few empirical studies within counseling psychology have made Social Class a primary variable of interest, there are numerous career theories within this discipline that incorporate social class. The theories described in the sections below are important to examine because they incorporate social class within the counseling psychology discipline, and have thus provided an important theoretical lens through which this current qualitative study was designed.

*Social-Cognitive-Career Theory.* Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994) is one theoretical model that allows for the inclusion of Social Class or SES as variables of interest. This model emphasizes the process through which individuals develop interests, how people make choices about pursuing a given career, and how and why people perform and persist in given occupations and educational settings (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003). A unique aspect of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is that it enables us to examine external, contextual factors that

affect the career development process (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003). Some important studies have used Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) model to examine sociocultural factors such as race and ethnicity (Flores & O'Brien, 2002; Hackett & Byers, 1996). Significantly fewer have examined social class using SCCT as a framework, despite the fact that social class variables fit easily within the model. The SCCT model includes two ways of examining sociocultural determinants of career development: person-input variables and contextual variables. Both of these types of variables indirectly affect career choice behavior through their influence on learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, and interests (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Person-Input variables are sources of individual differences that are, for the most part, unchangeable characteristics an individual is born with. Race, ethnicity, and gender are a few examples of person-input variables that have been widely examined by counseling psychology research. These person-input variables, while often static, may have a significant effect on subsequent variables in the SCCT model, which then have an overall effect on career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Social class, like race or gender, is another pre-existing characteristic that has the potential to profoundly influence an individual's career development. By conceptualizing social class as a person-input variable, it becomes easier to locate the mechanism by which social and economic pressures may affect perceived career options among adolescents. This model makes it possible to look at external forces and opportunity structures that may either help or hinder an adolescent's perceived career options. SCCT also incorporates the psychological *experiences* associated with those person-input variables. Therefore,

person-input variables include sociocultural factors of social class which in turn affect an adolescent's perception of what careers are feasible options for him/her.

Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) differentiate between person-inputs and contextual determinants, which are another source of influence on career development. Person-inputs (such as social class), may affect an individual's opportunities or perceptions of career options, whether or not the person realizes it is occurring. Contextual factors, however, go beyond an individual's person-input characteristics to include the individual's *perception* and *appraisal* of those characteristics and circumstances (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). This emphasizes the fact that the individual has an active role in interpreting potential supports and barriers that result from various contextual inputs (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). These contextual determinants affect career choices in two ways: distal, or proximal (Lent, Brown, & Hackett 1994; 2000). Distal contextual variables include background influences that "precede and help shape interests and self-cognitions" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, p. 107), while proximal contextual determinants include factors that become salient at critical points for career choice (e.g. networking) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). "Social Class Worldview" (Liu et al., 2004) includes an individual's perception of how class and classism affect him/her, and thus fits Lent, Brown, & Hackett's (1994) definition of a contextual determinant. Furthermore, Social Class Worldview may come into play at both the distal and proximal levels. This conceptualization of Social Class Worldview as a contextual determinant helps to describe the process by which adolescents may be affected by their social class.

SCCT, through its attention to worldview, is highly applicable to the study of an economically privileged adolescent population. While external societal and economic barriers may not be inhibiting these adolescents from certain careers, it is likely that they, too, are exposed to a narrow range of learning experiences. Specifically, they may lack learning experiences for fields that are not stereotypically “acceptable” for upper class individuals. Thus, their social class may affect their learning experiences and hence their overall self-efficacy and outcome expectancies for related occupations. Additionally, adolescents experience various supports and barriers based on social class factors, but the perception of *how* social class is working in their lives can make a fundamental difference in their career development. For instance, adolescents from economically privileged or upper class backgrounds may interpret their opportunities and supports in different ways depending on their Social Class Worldview. Some adolescents may simply be aware of their economic advantages and perceive a greater number of career options. However, other economically privileged adolescents may come from a background which gives them a heightened awareness of classism. In other words, these adolescents may be particularly attuned to the specific careers that they have been taught are “acceptable” for their respective social class background. Therefore, the Social Class Worldview of these adolescents may prevent them from considering careers that society (or their immediate social class environment) sees as “beneath” them. Their perceived career options have been limited by a distal contextual variable—in this case Social Class Worldview. Overall, Lent, Brown, & Hackett’s SCCT (1994) provides a very useful framework for examining the effects of social class and Social Class Worldview on adolescent career choices. It allows for the consideration of 1) Societal supports and

barriers associated with social class identification (a person-input variable), and 2) The adolescent's *perception* of those supports and barriers via their Social Class Worldview (a contextual determinant). In both instances, social class has the potential to significantly shape an adolescent's perceived career options.

*Circumscription and Compromise.* Gottfredson developed her 1981 theory of Circumscription and Compromise based on several observations and motivators. One of these was the fact that career theory often ignores factors such as intelligence and SES in favor of interests and values, which may, asserts Gottfredson, be weaker predictors of career choice (Gottfredson, 1981). Gottfredson states that in developing a career theory in which an individual finds satisfaction based on the compatibility between their self-concept and chosen career, it only makes sense to include factors such as socioeconomic status as part of that self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981). Furthermore, Gottfredson sees this development of self-concept beginning early, often established by adolescence. Hers is a developmental theory that, like Holland theory (1997), claims that individuals choose occupations that correspond with their view of themselves. However, her theory is unique in that it includes SES as a fundamental component of the individual's self-perception. Thus, career choice is partly affected by the social class identification of the individual (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002). This conceptualization of Social Class as a part of self-concept is important to this study, but even more salient is Gottfredson's view of "circumscription and compromise". This theory posits that as individuals develop, they begin to gain a personal picture of what their aspired occupations are, and which (if any) of these are "realistic" given the individual's self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002). "Circumscription" is the way in which individuals decide which occupations fit with their

self-concept, and “compromise” is the way in which they exchange certain career aspirations for “realistic” options (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002).

There are number of factors that adolescents consider in this process of circumscription, one of which is occupational prestige. According to Gottfredson, adolescents become aware of the prestige level of certain jobs, and develop preferences and ideas of what is “realistic” partly depending on how well the prestige level of an occupation fits with the adolescent’s existing social class (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002). Adolescents have a general picture of their own social class, and which occupations fit that social class. Depending on the adolescent’s social class, there are different levels at which jobs become “unacceptable”. Adolescents gain an understanding of this through both their own experience and parental messages as well (Gottfredson, 1981). By the time adolescents reach an age in which they must begin choosing a career path, they have a good conception of not only their preferences, but also the careers which correspond with society’s expectations of their respective social class background.

Once adolescents have developed a list of occupations that fit both their self-concept (including their social class), they enter a “reality stage” of career development (Gottfredson, 1981). At this point adolescents are faced with the realities of the work force, and become aware of the potential discrepancies between their circumscribed career preferences, and actual job availability. Adolescents are forced to alter their goals in order to deal with external forces and barriers that they cannot control. Therefore, they must compromise on various career characteristics (Gottfredson, 1981). Thus, there may be an element of the adolescent’s self-concept that is compromised in order to maintain another more valued aspect of self-concept. According to Gottfredson, the most central

aspect of self-concept that will take priority during this process is gender. However, following gender in its level of importance to self-concept is the maintenance of social standing, or the individual's social class. During the compromise process, adolescents are likely to sacrifice other elements of self-concept before choosing a job that is incompatible with their social class (Gottfredson, 1981).

Gottfredson's Circumscription and Compromise Theory (1981; 2002) makes a significant statement on the power of social class. Before individuals even think of entering the workforce, they have created an internal list of potential careers that fit them. Indeed, it is important for an adolescent to choose a career that fits his/her self-concept. Incongruity between an individual's skills or interests and their chosen occupation can result in unhappiness or dissatisfaction (Holland, 1997). It also makes sense that an adolescent would pursue career options that would allow him/her to work with other individuals of the same social class. Yet it seems a disservice to bright, inquisitive, and motivated adolescents that they are limited, almost from birth, to only those occupations that correspond with society's view of what is acceptable for someone of his/her particular social class. This creates an environment in which upper-class adolescents must only consider "upper-class careers", and lower-class adolescents are discouraged from aspiring to anything other than "lower-class careers". The upper-class adolescent interested in being a car mechanic is asked "Why don't you become an engineer?" At best, his/her passion for working on cars becomes a hobby. The lower-class adolescent interested in becoming a physician is discouraged, and is asked "Why don't you just be a medical technician?" At best, his/her passion for becoming a physician stays a dream. Of course there are external, economic supports and barriers as well as classism that play

an additional part in this process of compromise. Yet these external forces merely enhance and confirm what has already been ingrained in the self-concept of most every adolescent. Like gender and race, social class predisposes adolescents to thinking about their potential careers in a limiting way, and assists them in ignoring potentially fulfilling careers in favor of the “realistic” and socially “appropriate”.

*Orientation to the Future.* When adolescents contemplate their career choices, they are engaging in a process of future orientation. The way in which they perceive their future affects their decisions, which in turn affects their later adult life (Nurmi, 1991). It is important to examine this process of future orientation, as it reveals important differences in the way adolescents of different social classes perceive their future. Nurmi (1991) provides a theoretical framework for studying future orientation. This model includes three basic processes: 1) motivation, which includes the degree and type of interest individuals have in the future, 2) planning, which refers to how people see their interests being realized in the future, and 3) evaluation, which is the degree to which individuals expect their future goals to become a reality.

Nurmi (1991) also describes additional factors which interact with each of these three processes to ultimately influence future orientation, and thus potentially career choice. In the motivation stage, people set goals based on what they know about their expected life-span development. In other words, individuals may set initial goals (include career-related goals) based on whether or not these goals seem realistic when compared with their actual expectations for the future (Nurmi, 1991). According to Nurmi (1991), various “normative life events or developmental tasks” (p. 8) provide adolescents with knowledge about potential and desirable goals specific to their age.

These tasks provide the background for the development of goals and interests. An example of a normative life task is choosing a career (Nurmi, 1991). Thus, the process of choosing a career (normative life event) results in setting goals that correspond with the adolescent's anticipated life-span development. This in turn results in the motivation to pursue those career goals. Normative life tasks also affect the planning and evaluation stages of future orientation by providing a background from which 1) adolescents develop certain strategies for achieving set goals, and 2) adolescents develop ideas about the standards and deadlines for successfully attaining set goals (Nurmi, 1991).

The implications for social class and social class worldview are evident in the process of future orientation development. Nurmi (1991) acknowledges that differences in adolescents' social contexts may influence their normative life-span development. Social class is one such factor that impacts the normative development and thus the formation of future orientation in adolescents. Social class may dictate the opportunities available to adolescents, which can increase or decrease the number and variety of career-related goals that seem "realistic" to that adolescent. This, of course, affects their motivation for pursuing those goals. Furthermore, the career expectations perceived by upper class adolescents may be quite different from the career expectations perceived by middle and especially lower-class adolescents. In this sense, the adolescent's social class worldview also colors their perception of career goals that are realistic options for him/her, thus affecting ultimate motivation for pursuing specific careers. This motivation stage is thus a crucial aspect of adolescent career development, and particularly vulnerable to the effects of social class and social class worldview. Even after career goals have been set in the motivation stage, social class and social class worldview may

continue to impact the future orientation process. Adolescents from differing social classes may also differ in their perceptions of the nature “planning” and “evaluation”. In particular, adolescents from different social classes may have different views or expectations concerning the length of time it takes to successfully realize career goals. Research supports this, with some studies showing that upper class adolescents tend to form goals and an orientation that extends further into the future (Nurmi, 1991; O’Rand & Ellis, 1974). This is not an indication that lower-class adolescents lack the ability to think more long-term; future orientation is a complex variable, and an individual’s orientation to the future depends in part on situational variables (Trommsdorff, 1983). Therefore, this may be an example of how adolescents from lower social class background may feel the need to find a career quickly, whereas adolescents from upper social class backgrounds may perceive less time urgency in choosing a career to support themselves.

As with Gottfredson’s Circumscription and Compromise theory (1981; 2002), Nurmi’s conceptualization of future orientation provides an important commentary on the potential for social class and social class worldview to significantly impact adolescent’s perception of realistic career options. Furthermore, Nurmi’s work delineates the process by which adolescents set and pursue goals which are dependent on the initial “motivation” for realistic and social-class appropriate careers. Adolescents work from a distinct disadvantage when their social class and consequent social class worldview limits their potential for pursuing their passion.

*Conclusion.* It is evident that counseling psychology has made critically important contributions to the theoretical literature on career psychology and vocational

development. These theories described above have direct implications for studying and understanding the connection between social class identity and career aspirations, and they have accomplished a great deal in terms of describing the process of career selection and career development in adolescents. However, further research is needed to provide empirical data which may further enhance our knowledge regarding this connection, and specifically how class identity functions in the career circumscription process among adolescents. With the exception of Liu's work on Social Class Worldview, there is little literature that attends to the psychological components of social class identity, and the literature that does is largely focused on lower social class backgrounds. While this is certainly crucial research, it does ignore the psychology of social class privilege, which is also important to examine. In order to provide a theoretical framework for economically privileged adolescents, it is therefore useful to turn to other disciplines which have more thoroughly examined the nuances of social class identity.

#### Class Identity and Implications for Career: A Sociological Context

It is now necessary to take a step back, and to identify more broadly how economically privileged adolescents may come to acquire their notions of acceptable careers. While the theory and literature in the previous section demonstrates that counseling psychology has to some extent been concerned with the intersection of class and career, there are some important components of the class experience and its effects on career development that require a further examination, and that are not as well-represented in the counseling literature. Namely, for the purpose and goals of this qualitative study, it is necessary to provide some theoretical and empirical background on: a) the conflicting concepts of class mobility and social reproduction, b) the

psychological identity of class, c) the unique experience of being from the upper class.

The sociological and women's studies literature harbor a number of theoretical and empirical works, both classic and current, that address the hierarchical system of class in our society, and how careers and occupations serve to maintain and perpetuate that system.

### *Social Mobility and Social Reproduction*

The "American Dream" is the powerful and widespread belief that everyone in our country starts on a level playing field, and that if you work hard enough, you can become rich, and that the social class you begin with does not inhibit you from reaching the top of our socioeconomic hierarchy (Holtzman, 2000). It is a hopeful idea, and one that has been supported by countless movies, television shows, songs, and even real-life "success stories". As of the year 2000, nine of the 100 biggest box office grossing movies related to social class. Of these nine, two related a story of the American Dream (Holtzman, 2000). Yet if one steps outside the movie industry, and into the sociological literature, a more common phenomenon is "social reproduction" (Kaufman, 2003), which occurs at both the systemic and individual level. Social Reproduction refers to the process by which generations pass down their social class position to offspring (Kaufman, 2003). While individuals may or may not be consciously aware of the fact that social reproduction is operating in their lives, they *are* acutely aware of their life choices, which are in turn influenced by their social class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). More specifically, adolescents' perceived options in life may be the result of habitus, which is the concept that one's family background guides him/her towards making decisions in life that stem from internalized belief in the opportunity for success, and also serve to

reinforce the social order (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Furthermore, as a result of their familial and social class background, most of these students are perfectly capable of realizing these expectations for success. They possess the necessary cultural capital, which is, “the cultural beliefs, personal skills, knowledge, and dispositions that enable one to succeed, [and] also guides the decision-making process” (Schleef, 2000, p. 156). These attributes are the domain of the dominant group in society, and possessing such highly valued cultural capital enables individuals to remain a part of the dominant group (Giroux, 1983). One study, for example, found that parental involvement in the education of their offspring (one form of cultural capital) magnifies other forms of capital, which provides various advantages in the child’s educational achievement (McNeal, 1999). This is just one of many ways in which cultural capital can magnify the advantages privileged individuals possess from birth, through education, and through occupational achievement.

How do these sociological constructs of social reproduction, habitus, and cultural capital ultimately affect the perceived career options of economically privileged adolescents? These phenomena are manifested in a number of ways, such as in the push among privileged adolescents towards pursuing appropriately prestigious degrees (Schleef, 2000), or attending appropriately prestigious schools (Ostrove, 2003). Adolescents may welcome this influence, rebel against this influence, or be totally indifferent. However, the possibility remains that it is the combination of habitus and cultural capital which results in the system wherein high SES individuals pursue a particular range of career options not as a natural choice, but rather as an indoctrinated

means of maintaining social class privilege, or social class “homeostasis” (Liu et al., 2004; Schleef, 2000).

### *Social Class Identity*

Despite the undeniable power of cultural capital, social reproduction, and habitus, the process of prestigious occupational attainment among upper-class adolescents is most likely more complicated than simply following a path that has been programmed since their birth. The desire or pull to maintain social class homeostasis is an extremely powerful predictor of occupational choice, and it occurs at varying levels of an individual’s awareness. Some individuals from higher social class backgrounds may choose a given career path because they want to achieve the same level of material wealth as their parents. But there are additional reasons for maintaining one’s social class, about which individuals may have little or no awareness, and which are deeply rooted in their sense of social class identity.

Throughout the process of development, children and adolescents become increasingly more aware of how they are distinct, but also how they fit within various social categories. Thus, throughout the developmental process, individuals gain not only a psychological self, but a social self as well (Ruble, Alvarez, Bachman, Cameron, Fuligni, Coll, & Ree, 2004). This social self includes an individual’s social class grouping, or “social class identity”, which incorporates a number of important components, ranging from a parent’s income level, to what they wear, to how they speak. In a study of teenagers in England, girls of various social class backgrounds talked about the concept of class and how one can identify members of specific socioeconomic groups. When asked what makes someone “upper class”, the girls mentioned money, but

they also mentioned “upbringing”, the friends with whom someone spends their time, where their parents went to school, the perception of their overall attitude (being a “snob”), and yes, even their sock-color (Frazer, 1988). It is therefore apparent that money is only one part of the equation; membership in a social group, and hence an individual’s social class identity, requires a much more finely tuned set of behaviors and cultural assets.

For individuals of all classes, social identity becomes well-established, and often results in the kind of in-group and out-group bias originally conceptualized by Tajifel and Turner (1979, cited in Ruble et al., 2004). And ultimately, an adolescent’s sense of this collective social identity can influence his/her construction of “possible selves” (Ruble et al., 2004). In other words, adolescents form goals and values based on their in-group collective identity which includes their social class identity. It follows, therefore, that occupational goals and aspirations would be one element of development that is affected by this social class identity. According to Ogbu (2004), people’s collective identity is often expressed through various symbols that signify the group’s system of values, attitudes, and beliefs (Ogbu, 2004). Occupations are one extraordinarily powerful symbol of collective identity for all classes, and thus provide a mechanism through which an individual can choose to maintain his/her existing social class.

While many individuals may choose occupations that are congruent with their social class identity, there are also many who desire to move along the social class hierarchy, and who strive to take advantage of class mobility and achieve a higher social class standing. While our society and culture promotes such ambitions, there are also psychological consequences that may result from moving away, or even rejecting the

occupational “rules” of one’s social class identity group. To stray from the career paths associated with one’s social class group would mean rejecting or opposing a part of one’s socioeconomic identity, and this certainly exists when moving up *or* down the in social class standing. For higher SES individuals, for example, opposing their socioeconomic identity involves potentially rejecting the cultural capital that ensures them a place in a dominant, and therefore privileged, position in society. Individuals from higher SES backgrounds have been taught that, “working class knowledge and culture are seen not as different and equal, but as different and inferior” (Giroux, 1983, p. 269). And so, even if an occupation seems interesting or fulfilling, it is often discarded as an option because of the inherent need to maintain one’s sense of social class identity.

There are other reasons, in addition to simply the reluctance to forego privilege, which may make it difficult for high SES individuals to choose an occupation that may distance them from their social class of origin. These reasons stem from the fact that social class identity includes not only the individual’s sense of *personal* belonging in a social class group, but also incorporates the degree to which there is “reciprocal membership”, or the degree to which individuals “accept and are accepted by significant others as members of a particular social class because they have embraced and identified with the cultural dispositions of that particular group”(Kaufman, 2003, p. 482). This is a critical component of social identity because it is through this process of becoming accepted into a new group that social class mobility is possible. To achieve a new social class identity, the other members of the aspired group must accept you. Thus, there are fears and possible distress associated with engaging in “social transformation” and entering a new and different social class group (Kaufman, 2003). Individuals from

higher social class backgrounds may fear that they will not be accepted, or will be unable to effectively engage in the activities of any “lower” social class, which is further compounded by the fact that society (especially the upper class) would most likely not understand why they would desire such a shift in the first place. The risk, therefore, is that upper class adolescents may feel trapped in their social class of origin. And while being “trapped” in privilege may seem like an oxymoron, it does not come without its own costs.

#### *Costs (?) of Social Class Privilege*

Everyone is middle class. Or at least that is the message that seems to saturate American culture. When asked about their social class, many people will describe some variation or sub-group of the middle-class. Seldom does one hear somebody proudly or loudly claim a working-class *or* upper-class background. In her chapter on the experience of an economically privileged woman who has moved *down* to the middle-class, Frances Maher (1999) introduces the concept of “marginalized privilege”. Because we live in a society which relies so heavily on its belief in a meritocracy where most individuals are middle-class, individuals whose social class identity is in actuality either above or below the middle-class can feel like an outsider. Some upper-class individuals may feel that in order to “fit in”, they must reject the aspects of their identity that are actually upper-class in origin (Maher, 1999). So while their privilege may allow them to feel accepted in a place like a prestigious Ivy League school, they may also feel isolation if they ever feel the desire to stray from the upper-class path (Ostrove, 2003). Additionally, the assumption of the all-encompassing middle class carries with it implications for one’s sense of achievement. In our individualistic culture, we focus on

individual accomplishment set amidst a classless social structure, and by doing so we avoid the fact that we do, in fact, live in a class-stratified society (Maher, 1999). This mentality is potentially harmful for both the working class and upper class, who may feel alienated and marginalized because they do *not* rest easily in the middle class. For upper-class individuals, for example, our society's assumed meritocratic system may cause individuals from upper-class backgrounds to feel that only in the middle-class is it justified for people to feel that they have deserved the accomplishments they worked towards (Maher, 1999). Achievement for upper-class individuals may feel like a kind of "fraud", wherein their accomplishments are merely a product of privilege (Maher, 1999).

How does the concept of "marginalized privilege" translate to the process of career development in adolescents? If an individual chooses an occupation that would result in a move "down" to the middle-class or working-class (even if the occupation itself feels positive and psychologically congruent), there is still the risk of feeling marginalized, or feeling the need to hide elements of his/her personality or background that reveal an upper-class social identity of origin. Therefore, many adolescents may avoid this situation altogether, and choose the safety of a familiar social class identity, rather than career congruence. This potential career-decision-making process is well represented in a story told by women's studies scholar Laurel Guymer (1999). Guymer relates the story of a friend of hers, from a private school and economically privileged background, who expressed an aspiration for becoming a hairdresser. She was receiving a prestigious education, so the expectation was that she should pursue an occupation such as law or medicine that would befit her social class status. The school actually threatened to expel this woman, with the rationale that her parents were not paying for her education

so that she could become a hairdresser—a middle or work-class occupation. Guymer describes how this event communicated a profoundly powerful message for her and her privileged friends: “Only the ‘dummies’ did hairdressing” (Guymer, 1999, p. 228).

Another study on the motivation to attend law or business school demonstrates a similar phenomenon. For the students in this study, the decision to enter law or business school may ultimately be their choice, but the drive for financial success is actually much more deeply ingrained, and exists even without their knowledge. The desire to remain a part of the same socioeconomic group (and thus choose from a limited range of careers) is far more complex than simply wanting to possess material items. Many of the participants seemed to have chosen these prestigious post-graduate programs as a means of maintaining their social class status, rather than to reach a specific occupational goal (Schleef, 2000). One participant, for example, was a woman pursuing law school who admitted that a law career did not fit her personality. She had planned on becoming a doctor, but struggled with the coursework. She thought about becoming a nurse instead, but described nursing as a “big step down” (Schleef, 2000, p. 162). She settled on a career in law because it provided the prestige she wanted and because she wanted her parents to be able to say “My daughter is in law school” (Schleef, 2000, p. 162). Thus, this particular woman was forced to take into account her skills, but chose to ignore searching for a career that might be congruent with her personality, because the pursuit of prestige (ingrained through family influence and collective identity), was more important to her.

These case examples provide telling commentary on how our society’s beliefs and expectations regarding class mobility and social class identity limit individuals in their

perceptions of occupational choice. The adolescent woman who wanted to be a hair-dresser dared to imagine a working-class profession might be fulfilling and enjoyable to her. She learned quickly that to pursue such a path would have drastic results: expulsion was one result to be sure, but she also risked something potentially more damaging: she risked rejection by her social class group—the group that constitutes much of her social identity. For her, the safe path was to “choose” an occupation that fit her social class of origin, and would ultimately allow her to remain a woman of privilege. And the post-college woman who pursued law school made her decision for similar reasons: becoming a nurse was simply not a desirable occupation for someone from an economically privileged background.

### *Conclusion*

The pressure for individuals of all social class backgrounds to abide by the rules of social reproduction and choose an occupation appropriate to their social class of origin is certainly powerful, and begins early in the lifespan. Adolescents may resist that pressure, but they do so at the risk of “betraying” their well-established social class identity. Thus, there are both systemic and individually psychological mechanisms that push individuals to choose occupations that will help them remain within their social class of origin. Again, this is problematic in that it prevents adolescents from pursuing potentially meaningful work that simply may not fulfill their social group’s expectations of an acceptable career choice. And more globally, this serves to reinforce the social order—to maintain class stratification, and to pass economic privilege from generation to generation.

Purpose/Rationale

Our society's world of work is saturated with symbols of social class and economic hierarchy. We live in a country that espouses the opportunity for social mobility (Ehrenreich, 2001), yet subtly and simultaneously encourages social class groups to maintain social class homeostasis (Ehrenreich, 1989; Schleef, 2000). Most adolescents, each of whom possesses his/her own unique Social Class Worldview (Liu et al., 2004), develops a list of occupations that may or may not be consistent with his/her subjective perception of desired social class status. Adolescents from higher social class backgrounds are given the message that they should aspire to economic privilege, and also that it is unbearable to be trapped in an occupation that is not personally gratifying (Hemmings, 2004). While these two messages are not always incompatible, they may present a problem for some adolescents, who are forced to make the choice between potentially fulfilling career options, or careers that follow a socially appropriate path. Of course there is the chance that rejecting one's social class group has the potential to create its own sort of psychological distress. But the psychological distress associated with an unfulfilling career can be acute as well (Multon et al., 2001), and all adolescents, including those from high SES backgrounds, should have the opportunity to choose from as wide a range of occupations as possible.

In this qualitative study, I will explore economically privileged young women's subjective perceptions of social class ("social class worldview"), and how this social class worldview affects their career development process, and specifically their perceived career options. Through qualitative interviews and a subsequent follow-up questionnaire, I hope to gain knowledge related to the following general research questions which will guide this study:

1. How much emphasis do these young women from high social class backgrounds report placing on their social class when forming their beliefs about potential careers?
2. What do young women from economically privileged backgrounds perceive to be their career options? Are there specific occupations that these students perceive as unacceptable (not options) as a result of their perceived social class?
3. Do the students report any barriers that are unique to their social class background? (i.e. Do they report any types of pressure or difficulties in forming career goals that are directly related to their economically privileged background?)
4. What are the primary sources from which the young women seem to gain their beliefs about socially acceptable and socially unacceptable career options? (i.e. From parents? From the media? From friends?)

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Qualitative Design*

As previously mentioned in the literature review section, the empirical literature on the intersection of career development and social class is minimal within Counseling Psychology. And when further limited to a specifically economically privileged adolescent population, the literature is all but non-existent. Resources focusing on qualitative research design overwhelmingly state that a qualitative design is an appropriate methodological approach when confronted with this situation (Fassinger, 2005; Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because little is known about how social class and social class perceptions may affect the career development process of economically privileged adolescents, it seems desirable to utilize a design which will allow for a more nuanced understanding of these mechanisms. Thus, on a practical level, qualitative methodology quickly emerged as a logical option for conducting an in-depth exploration of this specific population and issue.

In addition to qualitative methodology's capacity to simply provide new perspective and knowledge on a previously under-researched topic, it also corresponded with the philosophical and theoretical aims of this study. Traditionally, qualitative research has served as an alternative to the more rigid positivist and post-positivist paradigms that frequently govern quantitative research, and has been used in many social science disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. In Counseling Psychology, however, qualitative research has been used much more seldom, in favor of more stereotypically "rigorous" quantitative methods. This is curious, as the nature and spirit

of Counseling Psychology strongly values research which examines the sociocultural contexts that influence human behavior, and the lived experiences of diverse individuals. While quantitative research is by no means incapable of capturing these phenomena, it also seems logical to more frequently utilize qualitative methodology—a methodology which describes and interprets the unique experiences of a given population in a specific setting, and also uses the actual language, stories, and examples of that particular population as a means of understanding the complexity of their situation (Ponterotto, 2005). The tenor and goals of a qualitative study will shift depending on the specific ontological and epistemological paradigms used by the researcher. Yet the overarching philosophy of qualitative methodology remains constant: to use an inductive approach in order to better understand a sample of individuals with common experiences. It is with this fact in mind that a qualitative research design was selected for this particular study. For this project, the goal is not to uncover “truths” about the nature of social class and career among economically privileged adolescents, but rather to explore and describe their experiences inductively, and with an open-mindedness that allows for themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data collected. And it is this constructivist and interpretivist research paradigm that led to not only the selection of a qualitative design, but even more specifically to the selection of Grounded Theory.

*Grounded Theory.* There are differing perspectives on which epistemological and ontological paradigms describe and include the qualitative process of Grounded Theory (Fassinger, 2005). Grounded Theory has often been conceptualized as one of the most rigorous forms of qualitative methodology, and is therefore sometimes favored by qualitative researchers who are more comfortable with a positivist and/or quantitative

mode of scientific inquiry (Patton, 2002). While the roots of Grounded Theory (as originally conceptualized by Glaser and Strauss) certainly incorporate rigorous procedural requirements (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the theory has evolved into one that has been applied to a diverse range of disciplines, and has also been utilized in various forms (Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007; Fassinger, 2005). Yet despite the controversy and sometimes clashing viewpoints on the stringency to which it is necessary to abide by classic Grounded Theory procedures, there is a consistent end-goal. That is, Grounded Theory seeks to, “produce innovative theory that is ‘grounded’ in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context” (Fassinger, 2005, p. 157). Because of its focus on the lived experiences of the participants, current qualitative researchers in the field of Counseling Psychology have more recently classified Grounded Theory into a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm (Creswell et al., 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). This corresponds well with the theoretical framework for this particular project, which draws heavily on the concept of worldview and emphasizes the notion that every individual perceives his/her social class through a different lens. It is important to select a methodology that accounts for individual differences and contextual factors, rather than one which seeks to test and prove a hypothesized “truth” regarding the connection between social class and career development.

Additionally, Grounded Theory is also highly attuned to the inevitable individual bias of the researcher, and incorporates several procedural elements which help control for (yet do not purport to eradicate) the sources of bias that can potentially influence the processes of data collection and analysis (Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

When conducting qualitative interviews on a topic (such as social class), which is highly prone to pre-existing beliefs, it is important to select a methodology, like Grounded Theory, which recognizes and addresses individual bias. For this reason, in addition to its previously mentioned attention to the complexity of individual lived experiences, Grounded Theory seemed an appropriate and highly fitting qualitative methodology for this particular research study.

*Grounded Theory Sources.* Because Grounded Theory methodology has been revised by numerous writers and researchers, it is important to specify the primary sources that were used throughout the course of this project. As mentioned already, the theoretical framework that guided this research was a combination of constructivist and interpretivist epistemologies, with an additional attention to social justice. Thus, the resources chosen for this project reflect that framework. Kathy Charmaz's 2006 publication *Constructing Grounded Theory* provided great systematic guidance on how to "construct" an alternative form of grounded theory from the more rigid positivist methods originally introduced by Glaser and Strauss. However, it also seemed important to select a resource that defined a more "classic" approach to grounded theory, in order to ensure that the basic fundamentals of this method were followed and achieved. For that purpose, Strauss and Corbin's *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1998) served as another important structural guideline, particularly during the process of analysis. Thus, these two resources were used in tandem in order to 1) achieve a solid foundation in grounded theory research, and 2) subtly revise positivist procedures to reflect a nuanced and reflective constructivist process.

In addition to these primary sources, several supplemental resources on qualitative research and the use of grounded theory were frequently reviewed. Early in the process of research design, Patton's 2002 text on qualitative methods assisted in defining the various types of sampling and selection, and also provided a useful summary on the overarching principles common to the various methods of qualitative research. Additionally helpful in the early stages of research design were sources closer to the field of counseling psychology. While qualitative research is still seen seldom in the major counseling psychology journals, it did receive great attention in a recent issue of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (2005), which examined the use of qualitative methods in the context of counseling psychology research. This, too, was an important source of guidance, as it provided a way of approaching qualitative research that was consistent with the aims and philosophical values of counseling psychology. Particularly helpful in this issue was Ruth Fassinger's article (2005) which outlines grounded theory specifically, and stresses the importance of self-reflection, a less rigid and constructivist framework, and the methods which have been most helpful for her in capturing the lived experiences of qualitative interview participants. Additionally, a core component of counseling psychology is a commitment to social justice and diversity, and this project aimed to reflect that commitment. Thus, Charmaz's chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005) was an irreplaceable source, as it strove to describe how, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, grounded theorists can conduct research that advances social justice issues. This chapter critically examines the positivist roots of grounded theory, followed by a thorough description of how social justice principles inform both the process of analysis and writing a manuscript. Particular attention was paid to this source throughout

the writing process, in order to develop a manuscript that persuasively, sensitively, descriptively, and thoroughly examines socioeconomic privilege and its implications for career at both the individual and societal levels.

In general, every effort was made to maintain an intentional, consistent, thoughtful, and explicit analysis process despite logistical limitations. Multiple other sources were consulted and used throughout design, implementation, analysis, and writing. Yet the integration of these core resources formed the backbone of this research project, and helped in the completion of a project that felt methodologically sound, and philosophically consistent with counseling psychology and with the theoretical framework of the researcher.

#### *Population, Sampling, and Recruitment*

*Population.* The sample for this study was drawn from a small, private, Catholic preparatory school in the Southern Mid-West, where the majority of the students are from an upper-middle-class to upper-class social class background. To protect the confidentiality of the school and hence, the participants, the school is given a fictitious name throughout this manuscript, “St. Charles”. Many of the quotes refer to the school by name, and so it was necessary to provide a replacement.

In the winter of 2005, the researcher, along with two other members of a research team, collected quantitative data for a separate study at this school. Data was collected on students’ Social-Class Worldview, as well as a number of measures of academic and career self-efficacy. At the time of data collection, the participants indicated on their consent form if they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Those students who said “yes” included their contact information, and indicated how they

would prefer to be contacted (e-mail, telephone, mail). The school's administrators granted permission to collect further qualitative data from a sample of these students.

*Initial Sampling and Participant Selection.* Qualitative analyses use a number of different approaches when sampling the population of interest. Yet despite the variation in sampling methods, the common denominator in all qualitative research is the use of "purposeful sampling" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). For this study, the overall approach to participant selection was to recruit a "homogenous sample" (Patton, 2002, p. 235). This approach is particularly useful when attempting to describe a particular sub-group in depth (Patton, 2002). Because the population of interest in this study is so seldom studied in relation to career development, it seemed appropriate to begin this line of research with as little variation in the sample as possible.

This approach, in combination with feedback from the researcher's doctoral committee, resulted in the decision to limit participant recruitment to one gender, and the researcher decided to limit the investigation to adolescent girls based on personal interest and background knowledge. Additionally, the school's student body is primarily Caucasian, and thus the sample for this study replicated that demographic distribution with 100% of participants being white. Maintaining homogeneity in age was more challenging. While every effort was made to recruit only juniors for the study, limitations in the number of eligible juniors resulted in an expansion of the selection pool to all classes. Also, because the quantitative data had been conducted the previous year, no freshmen were available for recruitment. Similarly, some of the originally surveyed pool had graduated since the data was originally collected. Contact information was also

absent from one eligible case, thus limiting the final pool to 40 sophomore, junior, and senior adolescent girls.

Once the pool of 40 relatively homogenous girls was established, the researcher used a process of “purposeful random sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 240) to begin contacting potential participants one by one. The rationale for randomly selecting within the pool of 40 was to give all eligible girls an equal chance of participating. While this does not ensure statistical representativeness, it does lend credibility to the results (Patton, 2002). Ultimately, the researcher contacted 30 of the 40 eligible participants, and recruited 15 participants who indicated a willingness to participate in a qualitative interview. Of these, 12 interviews were scheduled and successfully completed during the months of March, May, and June, 2006.

*Revised Theoretical Sampling and Saturation.* While the data analysis procedures for this study will be explicated in detail in the following section, it is necessary to provide an overview of the sampling process and how the final number of analyzed transcripts was reached.

Traditionally, a hallmark of Grounded Theory procedures is the utilization of “Theoretical Sampling”. Therefore, the “initial sampling” described above is merely a beginning point where researchers establish some criteria for choosing the people or cases they wish to sample before entering the field (Charmaz, 2006). This initial sampling may result in just a handful of interviews—by no means the entirety of the ending sample. By contrast, theoretical sampling is the process of choosing additional participants *after* having begun the process of analysis, and determining where there are gaps in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, with

traditional Grounded Theory, theoretical sampling requires that the researcher analyze and collect data concurrently, returning to the field multiple times in order to purposefully gather the data that is determined to be missing based on the researcher's analysis. Charmaz (2006) provides a helpful summarization of the difference between initial and theoretical sampling, stating, "Initial sampling in grounded theory is where you start, whereas theoretical sampling directs you where to go" (p. 100).

Due to practical considerations and the time constraints of this research project, the researcher was unable to adhere to the strict definition of theoretical sampling. This will be further addressed in the limitations section of this manuscript, Chapter 5. Instead, the researcher used what Fassinger (2004) refers to as a "modified grounded theory" procedure (p. 70). In other words, after all interviews were transcribed, analysis proceeded by coding 2 to 3 interviews, pausing as a team for some theoretical/analytical discussion and category development, and then returning to the next 2 to 3 transcripts with a more focused attention to the interview content. Thus, we engaged in a mimicking of the theoretical sampling process which will be described in great detail in the Data Analysis section that follows.

Another defining characteristic of Grounded Theory is the process of deciding when data analysis is complete, or when "Theoretical Saturation" has been reached. Traditionally, grounded theorists continue with their simultaneous analysis and sampling continues until they determine that the categories and emerging theory are sufficiently saturated with appropriate data. Again, the analysis for this study engaged in a modified form of this process. Rather than gathering *new* data until the point of saturation, the team continued to code and analyze new transcripts, and return to the old transcripts until

consensus was reached that saturation of categories had been achieved. Again, saturation will be explained in more detail in the “Data Analysis” section of this chapter.

When the research team reached consensus, the final sample of *analyzed* interviews for this study included ten adolescent girls. So while 12 interviews were conducted and transcribed, only ten were analyzed by the team, creating the final N. Of these, six were seniors in high school, and 3 were sophomores in high school. One was a junior. All participants were Caucasian, and the average age was approximately 17. A record of demographic characteristics is included in Appendix 12, which includes information on parental and extended family occupations, parents’ education level, colleges being considered, choice of college major (when applicable), occupations being considered, self-identified social class status, history of private education, average age of parents when married, and where the young women see themselves in ten years.

*Recruitment and Consent Procedures.* The majority of participants selected for this study were under the age of 18. Thus, the informed consent process included parental as well as participant-consent. I began the recruitment process by contacting students via the selection method described in the above section. Potential participants were initially contacted via phone or e-mail, depending on what they indicated on their previous consent form. (See Appendix 1 for examples of recruitment scripts.) If a student was still interested in participating in the interview, I offered to speak with her parent or guardian over the telephone in order to explain the purpose of the study, issues of confidentiality, any risks involved in participation, as well as compensation (See Appendix 2 for phone script). Prior to the interview, I also mailed a copy of a written consent form to the parent/guardian which I then collected on the day of the interview

(See Appendix 3). Also on the day of the interview, I once again explained (to the interviewee) issues of confidentiality, and obtained verbal consent to proceed with the interview (See Appendix 4).

*Risk and Resources.* There was minimal risk associated with this project, or at least no more than may be expected in everyday life. The interview required participants to think about issues related to their career aspirations and social class status, but these are not topics that typical high school students would not already be potentially addressing. However, it was assumed that the interview process might leave the participants with questions about choosing a career. Therefore, the researcher provided information on the career exploration process, and also provide contact information if they should have questions about additional occupational and/or career counseling resources.

#### *Data Collection*

*Overview.* Data collection for this study consisted of two phases: 1) a qualitative interview, with each participant, which will lasted approximately 45 to 75 minutes, and 2) a written, follow-up qualitative questionnaire. All the analyzed interviews took place in March and May of 2006. The timing of interviews provided enough time to distribute the one-month follow-up questionnaire which was sent in late-April. Each participant was e-mailed the follow-up questionnaire, with one exception where the follow-up was mailed. Students who completed both phases of the study (interview and follow-up questionnaire) were entered in a drawing for one of three \$100.00 gift certificates to a local shopping center. The drawing was conducted in June, and the winning girls were mailed their certificates.

*Interviews.* The interview protocol (See Appendix 5) consisted of a combination of standardized, open-ended questions and also conversational tactics. This was to ensure consistency across interviews, while also adopting a conversational style that felt more comfortable (and facilitated rapport-building) with the adolescent participants. This semi-structured format was consistent with most qualitative methods, and particularly with grounded theory (Fassinger, 2005).

The interviewees were conducted solely by the researcher, who has experience in conducting qualitative interviews, and has also completed coursework in qualitative research. The interviews took place in the participant's home, with one exception where the interview was conducted at the school for logistical reasons. The rationale for home-interviews being the primary site for interviews was three-fold. The researcher believed that, 1) There are likely to be fewer distractions at home, 2) The participant may be more aware of his/her social class background when immersed in the home/family of origin, 3) Observing the participant's home may give additional insight into his/her social class background. These assumptions proved to be mostly correct. In the one case where the interview occurred at the school, there were several distractions and the researcher was unable to take the same quality of field notes that resulted from interviews in the home.

The first two interviews were conducted in early March, 2006. Rather than conducting pilot interviews with high school students in the Columbia community, it was determined that it would be more informative to do pilot interviews from the population of interest. As a result of concern obtaining an adequate number of interviews, the researcher obtained consent to use the data from these participants in the final data set. Thus, the same consent procedures were followed for all participants. Additionally, these

two early interviews were successful in providing information-rich data, and demonstrated that a revision to the interview protocol (as approved by the Institutional Review Board) was not necessary. The next 7 interviews were conducted in late March, 2006, another two were conducted in May, 2006, and a final interview was conducted in June, 2006.

*Transcription.* The interviews were audio-taped using a digital recording device, and stored on the researcher's computer. These audio-files will be destroyed following the completion of this project. Nine of the transcriptions were completed by a paid transcriber, and the researcher transcribed one. Transcripts of each interview were used solely for the purpose of this research and data analysis, and were kept completely confidential by the researcher and the research analysis team. Additionally, each transcript was assigned a code, and the key to that code was kept separate from the interview transcripts.

*Follow-Up Questionnaire.* The follow-up questionnaire was designed to obtain any information that may have been overlooked during the initial interviews. This use of this format (rather than conducting face-to-face follow-up interviews) is partly due to logistic difficulties, because the researcher does not live in the same city as the participants. However, it was assumed that the written rather than oral format may have been more comfortable for some adolescent participants. Thus, the combination of both modes of data collection was intended to maximize the amount of data and responses received from the participants. The content of the follow-up questionnaire (i.e. the actual questions listed) remained open, and depended on the responses that were provided in the initial interview. See Appendix 6 for an example of a follow-up survey, along with a

sample returned survey. Immediately upon receiving the response e-mails from the participants, electronic copies of the questionnaire were saved, and the e-mails were destroyed. Copies of the questionnaire were used only for the purposes of this research project, and were kept completely confidential by the researcher and the research team.

Ultimately, 7 completed follow-up questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher. The remaining 5 participants did not respond to the follow-up, and were reminded at least once. Responses to the follow-up questionnaires varied in length and detail, and none exceeded a few short paragraphs. Some responded by saying they had nothing else to add to the information provided in their in-person interview. Because the follow-up questionnaires were sent prior to data analysis, it was difficult to determine the most useful questions to ask.

*Field Notes.* Another hallmark of qualitative research is the use of memos, field notes, and journals as legitimate and important tools for collecting data (Fassinger, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005). My observational data focused on the interviewee, the interviewee's home and surroundings, any observations about parent or sibling interactions, as well as my own personal reactions, which are also informative. Preliminary field notes were taken closely following each qualitative interview session. As soon as possible after leaving the participant's home, I recorded observations made during the interview, such as the home environment, the participant's affect and non-verbal cues, and anything else that seemed salient or that enriched the information simply provided in the interview tape.

The purpose of collecting this observational data was to gain a more holistic understanding of the participant's individual lived experience (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Particularly when working with a younger population, it seemed important to use methods beyond the self-report of the interviewee, as it may have been difficult for her to articulate many of the nuances of her entire social class experience or career search process. Thus, while the interviews transcripts certainly provided the bulk and most significant data, observations and field notes hopefully filled various gaps, and provided further context for the raw transcripts. These field notes were used to provide context when my research team approached a new interview, and also formed the basis for descriptive narrative regarding the experience of interviewing each participant. Narratives are provided throughout the Results Section in Chapter 4 of this manuscript.

#### *Introduction to Data Analysis*

There are numerous resources available that guide the process of grounded theory, some of which have already been discussed. Yet amidst every written procedural guideline for conducting grounded theory, there is also an element of variability. There are certainly common elements (which will be discussed), but within that framework there is room for the researcher to make individual decisions about the best process for constructing a grounded theory. Therefore, in addition to the resources listed previously, it is important to mention that I also engaged in constant and critical reflection to determine what process and procedures worked best for my particular analysis team. We developed a working style that emerged naturally from the analysis process, from team feedback, and from my own knowledge of grounded theory principles. When in doubt, the end goal to which I consistently returned was to capture the reality and lived experiences of my participants, grounded in the data, and to develop an inductive, analytic process which would best achieve that goal.

*Research Team Formation and Composition.* Grounded theory requires that the analyst/researcher look beyond individual assumptions and biases that may be pre-existing, but which also may develop during the research process. Many studies using grounded theory therefore use a research “team” during the coding and analysis phase of the study. The team design lends itself well to the self-reflexive process that is necessary in qualitative research, and also enriches the overall analysis by providing several different worldviews when engaging in the actual coding.

In order to form my research team, I first met with an advanced doctoral student who had recently conducted qualitative analysis in a team format. She provided information on factors to consider when forming the team, and gave suggestions for how to run team meetings. Her suggestions were considered as the team was formed, although not all criteria could be met based on student availability and scheduling. In general, I sought research team members who were likely to get along with each other, who could commit to at least 3 hours of work per week, and who possessed an interest and skill in analytical thinking and analysis. I then began contacting students in the department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology who I believed would meet the criteria. I met one-on-one with the prospective team members, explained the project, and described their role as a team member. Ultimately, a team was formed that included three other graduate students in the ESCP department. The members were: Kristen Kleffner, M.Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis; Sara Ensenberger, M.Ed., a masters student in School Counseling; and Kim Lay, M.Ed., a masters student in Counseling Psychology. The team members had varying levels of experience in research and in qualitative analysis, but were all invested

in learning the process of grounded theory. All three team members were white and female, but did come from various socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds which added an important source of diversity to our discussions of social class identity.

Analysis began in August of 2006, and all three members maintained participation through the fall semester, or December of 2006. At that point, Sara graduated and moved away. The team began meeting again in January of 2007 with just three members (Kristen, Kim, and myself), and continued meeting until analysis was complete at the end of February, 2007. Sara was not replaced, as the team chemistry was already well formulated, and the nuanced and irreplaceable nature of past discussions made it (in my view) impossible to simply replace her. Sara remained somewhat active via e-mail and served as one of our auditors at the end of the analysis process.

*Team Training.* Some team members had more experience and/or coursework than others in qualitative research methods, and none of the team members had background conducting grounded theory analysis specifically. Thus, before data analysis began, the team engaged in a brief training process to prepare them for the tasks involved. Each team member was provided with a large binder containing text-book chapters on grounded theory, as well as journal-article examples of grounded theory research. Their binders also included: 1) a glossary of terms related to qualitative analysis (e.g. epistemological and ontological paradigms), 2) a contact information sheet for members of the team, 3) a section for their team meeting agendas, which were provided at each meeting, 4) a section for copies of interviews being analyzed, and 5) a spiral-bound notebook to serve as their “self-reflexive journal” in which they could take notes on their personal reactions to the content of interviews and social class issues. I

met with the team to review these philosophical and procedural issues in order for each team member to feel confident and competent in their task. In the training, I also placed particular emphasis on the spirit and theoretical framework with which I hoped to approach the analysis. Thus, the training focused heavily on the end goal of capturing the participants' "lived experiences". See Appendix 7 for the training agenda and the topics covered at our training session.

I also provided the team with some background information on career development and social class, as well as the major constructs of interest, in order to give them a common level of base knowledge and language for discussing the interview content. However, I refrained from providing the team with extensive background literature and/or background theory on the topics of interest. The rationale for this was to allow the categories and themes to emerge naturally from the data, and to avoid the potential risk of previous studies influencing or biasing the team's data analysis process. Also, and according to grounded theory resources, it was important to prevent the team from imposing pre-existing psychological and sociological constructs on the emerging categories and theory (Charmaz, 2006). And finally, to prepare for the lengthy and highly collaborative task of data analysis, I planned some activities with the team focused on rapport building, and also demonstrated my appreciation for the work to come.

In addition to the initial training that occurred before analysis, it is also important to mention that an element of training continued throughout analysis, each time the team encountered a new phase of coding or a new analytical task. It was my intention to provide my team with sufficient rationale and explanations for every phase of the analysis. This was both to make the team's goal more clear, to create a collaborative

environment, and to simply make the experience of data analysis educational and professionally useful for these team members who volunteered(!) their time and efforts.

*Overview of Grounded Theory Analysis.* Once training was complete and the team was ready to begin data analysis, the team began to engage weekly in the coding process described in detail in the sections below. To set the stage for that description, a general framework and overview of the process is necessary.

In general, ground theory analysis begins with large segments of data—in our case, interview transcripts. Transcripts are broken into their smallest possible units, called “concepts”, and given names to represent those concepts (“coding”). Then concepts are analyzed and grouped into larger units called “categories”, each of which may contain various “subcategories” as well. Ultimately, the process of grounded theory development involves relating the most core category to other categories, validating the relationships with the transcript data, and then filling in categories which may require further development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As with every phase of this process, the substantive theory that is developed in the end is constantly compared to the original data, in order to thoroughly ensure that the theory being developed is “grounded” in the lived experiences of the participants (Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

There are some overall principles that guide each phase of grounded theory analysis and help to achieve the end goal of allowing a theory to emerge from the data. One of these is the practice of “constant comparison” (Fassinger, 2005; Heppner, Heppner, & Wang, 2004), which provides a method of approaching the data, and which remains constant from the beginning of analysis to the development of theory. This

involves constantly comparing differences in data across 1) individuals, 2) incidents, 3) points within one individual narrative, and 4) categories (Fassinger, 2005).

Another hallmark of grounded theory is its usage of distinct phases of coding that gradually decrease in specificity, and gradually increase in the ability to describe larger and larger chunks of data. The types of coding have varying names depending upon the resource being used to guide the process. Because two major sources were used in this particular study to guide coding (Charmaz, 2006 and Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the four subsequent names of the coding phases reflect that integrative approach. They are: 1) Initial/Open Coding, 2) Focused Coding, 3) Axial Coding, and 4) Selective/Theoretical Coding.

#### *Data Analysis*

*Initial Coding.* The first phase of coding in this study was “Initial coding” (Charmaz, 2006), frequently called “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this phase, the team’s task was to break each interview transcript into smaller units, and begin identifying those units as “concepts” (Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The overarching goal of initial coding is to break the data into discrete ideas or incidents, and to assign those units names that describes whatever phenomena they represent (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). See Appendix 8 for an example of a section of interview transcript with the concept codes included.

Before engaging in initial coding as a team, individual members of the analysis team independently conducted initial coding on a designated interview transcript. For each interview transcript, four copies were printed: one for each team member and one for myself. The transcripts were printed with large margins on the right to provide space

for coding notes. One team member was assigned the transcript, and was responsible for coding it before we met as a team to discuss it. The other two members were only responsible for reading the transcript. The role of coder alternated between team members, so that everyone was ultimately responsible for coding the same number of interviews. As the primary researcher, I coded all interviews independently. For the first round of interviews, the team members were instructed to code line-by-line, or sentence-by-sentence. The team members were given anywhere from 1 week to 3 weeks to code their assigned interviews.

Following individual coding, we met as a team and coded the majority of every interview together. If there were sections of the interview that were mostly content-related, I coded that section individually, with consultation from the team member who was assigned that interview. All new information or information-rich transcript data was coded as a team. I led the team through each transcript, indicating at which points I wanted us to code as a team. When we reached a section of data to be coded, I turned to the individual team member who had coded the interview to hear her thoughts and coding ideas first. Other team members responded to the coding ideas, and we discussed whether or not the codes fit the text. The length of time to decide how to name a particular sentence or paragraph in the transcript varied. We did not stop deliberating until consensus was reached. I was responsible for recording the agreed-upon concepts on an electronic copy of the transcript. Concepts names are indicated on the transcript by *Italics*. Upon completion of coding an interview, I provided each team member with our final, coded transcript for their records.

*Focused Coding and Category Development.* Closely related to “initial coding” is the process of “focused coding”. Focused coding is a term used by Charmaz (2006) in her grounded theory methodology. It refers to the process of, “using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data...”(Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Essentially, focused coding takes into account the known concepts, and makes analytically appropriate decisions about how to group the data that corresponds to those concepts into meaningful “categories” (Charmaz, 2006). To summarize, the results of initial coding are “concepts” and the results of focused coding are “categories”. In our analysis, initial and focused coding rarely functioned as separate entities. Rather, the team naturally alternated between both methods.

In more detail, the process of focused coding and category development proceeded as follows: As the initial coding progressed, concepts (or variations of a concept) began to emerge multiple times. When this occurred, I asked the team if they would like to create a “category” encompassing these concepts. And as the team became more familiar with the process, they often took the initiative to suggest creating a category. In this way, categories developed, and the team engaged in a comparative process in order to place data within those categories. Generally the team agreed to create a category, which I immediately recorded on the electronic version of our working “Category List”. The Category List was an integral party of our analysis. This was a working document which kept a detailed record of all the category titles, descriptions, date of creation, revisions, and content. As more and more data and codes accumulated, the category list naturally morphed and changed. Following each team meeting, I revised the list based on team consensus, and added the new coded content. A new, revised

version was saved after I made all the additions for each successive meeting. Thus, there is a different, modified category list corresponding to most every meeting of the team. I used this process to track our theoretical and conceptual progression through the interviews. See Appendix 10 for an excerpt from the final category list. (For earlier drafts of the category list, see the audit trail binder provided at the defense and in 16 Hill Hall.) Each team member was provided with the most updated category list at the start of every few meetings, in order for her to refer to existing categories as we engaged in discussion and as she coded her next interview.

Once several categories were developed, we began using category names to code larger chunks of transcripts. Team members had to reach consensus in our team meetings as to whether or not a particular section of transcript truly fit the category. As we moved farther in the process of category development and refined our categories and subcategories, chunks of text were often moved from one category to another. When it was decided that a section of data fit within a specific category, I recorded it on the electronic version of the transcript in the margins (along with the concepts) in ***Bold Italics***. As we developed more and more categories, team members were instructed to do line-by-line coding when a new thought/concept/theme emerged from the data. But when a segment of the transcript fit an existing category that we created during focused coding, they were instructed to use that code. In total, approximately 14 team meetings were dedicated to a combination of initial and focused coding.

*Axial Coding.* Once the team reached consensus on some initial categories, we began the process of “axial coding”, in which the team began looking for relationships and connections among the existing categories. “Axial coding” as defined by Strauss and

Corbin (1998) is a structured process wherein the researcher(s) develop categories and dimensions of categories, as well as “subcategories” that are more specific and context-driven than the categories developed during focused coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006) takes a somewhat less formal and structured approach to this phase of the research, engaging in a process wherein she develops subcategories of categories, and then delineates links between them as she learns more and more from the participants’ experiences represented by those categories. Our integrative approach to grounded theory resulted is a combination of these two types of axial coding. In general, we used constant comparison to analyze differences between, 1) subcategories and categories, 2) categories and new data that arose, 3) properties and dimensions of categories, and 4) variations or “disconfirming instances” in the data that required a re-coding or reconceptualization (Fassinger, 2005).

The ultimate goal in axial coding was to develop meaningful categories that represented various phenomena that emerged in the data. Further analysis of the categories resulted in “dimensions”, which represent the various sources of variability among participants within the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, the team developed a category during axial coding entitled “Awareness of Privilege”, which described the common *phenomenon* that many participants possessed an awareness of their level of privilege. The *dimensions* of this category arose from the differences between the participants’ level of guilt or discomfort with this privilege. Thus, one can look at this particular category along a continuum with awareness but no guilt on one end, and intense feelings of guilt and shame at the other. These dimensions are distinct from *subcategories* which we created to denote an entirely new phenomenon which was

inextricably related to a larger category. An example of a *subcategory* would be the category that describes the participants' attitudes toward planning for combining career and family, which is a sub-category of the larger category which describes their overall approach towards career planning. In this example, the beliefs about combining career and family are not simply dimensions of planning; they comprise an entirely new phenomenon that is designated as a subcategory.

As with most aspects of grounded theory analysis, there was no single, discrete period during which the team solely conducted axial coding. Axial coding often occurred spontaneously during analysis, when the team gained insight into a particular existing category, and subsequently chose to add sub-categories, or hypothesize relationships to other categories. However, the team did engage in more in-depth axial coding at some specified meetings, which occurred after coding approximately 2-3 interviews, and which we named "conceptual meetings". The purpose of these meetings was to take a break from coding, in order to emulate the true process of theoretical sampling, where more data is collected following a partial analysis. At these meetings, we focused entirely on discussion and constant comparison, and on category and subcategory development.

In order to prepare for these meetings, I independently reviewed transcript content, category lists, and memos (see description of memos in a following section). While reviewing these documents in addition to my grounded theory procedural resources, I looked for unanswered questions or places in our categories that left room for further discussion and analysis. By doing this, I was able to develop meeting agendas and lists of stimulus questions that furthered the process of axial coding. Specifically, I looked for the following:

- a. I looked for categories that were too broad and needed to be “broken down”. I did this by developing questions for the team that might help us to conceptualize each category as a dynamic phenomenon that was common to the participants, and then looked for dimensional differences (variability) within that particular phenomenon.
- b. I looked to answer some of the basic questions about the phenomena we were beginning to observe across interviews. I developed stimulus questions and meeting agendas that would engage the team in discussions to answer Who/When/Where/Why/How?
- c. I tried to develop some preliminary diagrams that represented relationships already discussed by the team. At meetings, I shared these with the team and asked for revisions, suggestions, and changes. We continued to revise these as we met. (See below for more description of these).

At the conceptual meetings, I took notes and kept audio recordings, which I listened to when I needed to be refreshed on the content of a particular discussion. I incorporated the content of the conceptual meetings into new memos, revisions to our diagrams, and revisions to our category lists. I shared new thoughts and the record of our discussion with the team at the following meeting. After a conceptual meeting or two, we returned to our data with a new perspective on what we might be looking for, and what themes/relationships/categories may be the most salient for our emerging model. See Appendix 9 for a sample agenda from a typical analysis meeting.

*Theoretical Saturation.* While it is difficult to describe exactly when the team moved from one phase of coding to another, it is somewhat easier to state when we no

longer analyzed *new* data—when we reached theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation, which is critical to the implementation of grounded theory, is often misrepresented in common language and even in some qualitative sources. It is frequently referred to as “when no new data emerges”, or when the data becomes “redundant”, and no longer reveals new information. This is an ambiguous definition at best, and an extremely overwhelming task for the beginning grounded theorist.

This study was guided by the description of theoretical saturation provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998), who state that saturation occurs when it meets the following criteria during the data analysis process: 1) No new categories of data emerge, 2) the development of categories is dense, and account for all paradigmatic elements, and 3) the relationships you have identified between categories are thoroughly developed and validated. While Strauss and Corbin (1998) do require that no new categories emerge, this is different than simply “no new data”. As already described, a category only develops when *several* new pieces of data emerge that point towards a similar phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) definition was used in combination with that of Charmaz (2006), who describes categorical saturation as the point at which “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of [the] core theoretical categories” (p.113). The important distinction with both of these definitions is that “saturation” applies not to the data-set as a whole, but rather to various *categories*. In other words, the entire analysis does not become saturated—the categories and their interrelated subcategories become saturated.

Another important element of saturation is the extent to which a category is relevant to all cases in the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This does NOT mean that a

category is saturated only if the data for every single participant is *identical*. There is room for individual variability within categories and subcategories. In fact, it is this variability that enriches the category and allows it to speak for more than just one type of person. A category should represent the “stories of many persons or groups reduced into, and represented by, several highly conceptual terms” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 145). Thus, a category becomes saturated when no new sources of variability within that particular phenomenon appear, and when the category feels sufficiently dense and descriptive of all the participants’ experiences. Variability is represented by the various dimensions which are specified in descriptions of each category in Chapter 4, Results.

A final and integral piece of grounded theory saturation is the extent to which the final set of categories and subcategories are presented as a set of “interrelated concepts, not just a listing of themes” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 145). It is therefore a requirement of saturation that the relationships between categories and subcategories are sufficiently dense and dynamic—a stagnant list of themes does not allow for theoretical saturation.

Our research team worked towards these goals of saturation throughout the coding process, and particularly during our “conceptual meetings” that were focused on axial coding. It is primarily the axial coding phase of analysis that creates subcategories, identifies sources of variability and dimensions within a given category, and delineates dynamic categorical relationships. Much of this process was guided by the writing of “memos” and creating diagrams; these are defining elements of grounded theory that are described in the next section.

In our study, the team reached saturation by engaging in axial coding and simultaneously discussing categorical saturation. When a thorough set of categories had been developed, and when the team felt that the interviews were not resulting in a creation of new categories, we began taking a more thorough and critical look at each individual category we had created. As we examined each category one-by-one, I posed the following questions to the team:

- 1) Do the quotes and data within this category seem like a coherent group? Are there quotes or pieces of data that seem to be describing a totally different phenomenon?
- 2) Is the current title of the category truly indicative of the phenomenon it purports to describe? Would an alternate title work better?
- 3) Do there need to be additional sub-categories within the main category in order to adequately describe variability? Despite the inevitable dimensions and sources of variability arising from individual participants, is there a common theme amongst all quotes and cases in this category?
- 4) How does this category relate to other categories we've developed? Does this category suggest implications for career development?

When each of these issues was sufficiently addressed and revisions were made, the research team consensually decided if we felt a category had reached the point of saturation. When this occurred for all our major categories, we stopped adding new data to the categories, and prepared for theoretical coding and theory development. It is important to note, however, that we did not achieve saturation for EVERY category that was initially developed in the course of data analysis. Many categories were created

because of initial data, but subsequent analyses did not provide enough additional data to reach a point of thorough saturation. The team reached consensus on the categories that *failed* to reach saturation as well, and these categories were subsequently omitted from the final theoretical model. This is consistent with grounded theory, which would simply identify these nascent categories as starting-points for additional data collection (theoretical sampling). Such categories will therefore be addressed in the Discussion section of this manuscript, when addressing “implications for future research”.

Additionally, there can also be an excess of data—data with a promising beginning, but ultimately failing to lead to a meaningful contribution to the emerging model. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) advice for this problem is to simply “trim the theory” and drop those lingering categories. The ultimate goal is a tight, coherent, non-cluttered, and complex theory with dense and nuanced categories. Therefore, there may be categories in previous category lists (See binder) that do not appear in the finalized category list or model. These are categories where the team determined there was either a) not enough data to reach saturation, or b) extraneous data that did not contribute to the overall model.

In sum, the team coded 10 interviews before reaching saturation. The emergent categories were trimmed and analyzed, resulting in 29 interrelated categories and/or subcategories that the team determined were saturated and which made strong contributions to the emerging model.

*Memo-Writing, Diagramming, and Note-Cards.* Before continuing with the description of theoretical coding and model development, it is important to describe some additional procedures that were fundamental to the analysis.

An integral part of Grounded Theory Analysis is the process of “Memo-Writing” (Charmaz, 2006; Heppner, Heppner, & Wang, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In grounded theory, memos are the bridge between the coding/data analysis and the final grounded theory model. Thus, it is important to explain the memo-writing process before moving into the descriptions of theoretical coding and theory development. Memos were written by me, the researcher, but were inspired by both my own independent thinking as well as the discussions held by team members at meetings. The memos recorded in the memo-list are of 3 types: Procedural, Categorical, and Conceptual. (See Appendix 11 for examples of each type of memo.)

Procedural Memos were written in order to document my own perception of how the coding and analysis process was going. I recorded things that went well at the meetings, and things that I thought might need to be changed in the process of analysis. I tried to remain aware of how the team members felt about the coding process, and what methods of discussion or coding worked best for them. Much of this was a “learn-as-you-go” process, and thus I documented the changes that were made throughout analysis.

Categorical memos, as the title suggests, were memos that described the rationale behind the development of various categories. These categories were originally embedded in the Category List, but ultimately removed and placed with the other memos in order to improve the clarity and conciseness of an already very long Category List. These memos are shorter in nature, as they simply provide a quick explanation of decisions regarding the creation, removal, or movement of a particular category. More lengthy memos on the relationships between categories or the implications of categories are included in the final group of memos: Conceptual Memos.

Conceptual Memos were spurred by the following incidents:

1. The thought processes and data analysis leading to the development of categories and subsequent revision of categories requires recording. Categories are not developed or changed without discussion or forethought, and the memos explain the process that led towards the progression of the category list.
2. As analysis progressed, the team (and I) began forming ideas and hypotheses about the relationships among categories and sub-categories. Whenever an important connection was noted across multiple interviews, the team engaged in discussion, and I attempted to capture those discussions through my written memos.
3. When I thought of an idea/concept/category that needed to be further explored by the research team, I recorded my thoughts in the form of memos as well.

Another essential form of memo-writing or record-keeping was “Diagramming”, which is common to the process of many grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Visual representations of relationships and processes helped our team immensely. When it seemed like we had identified a pattern or process in the data that was common across multiple interviews, we developed a diagram or model to explain what we were seeing. The diagrams were originally sketched on marker-board or paper at team meetings. Following the meeting, I formalized the diagram in Microsoft Excel, and brought copies to the team members at the next meeting for approval, revisions, and reference. These diagrams were continuously discussed and revised throughout the analysis process, and were a major source of guidance when we began theory

development. See the audit trail binder provided at the defense and in 16 Hill Hall for a collection of diagrams representing our progression towards a theory.

A final tool during analysis was the use of note cards, which was primarily helpful for me, the primary researcher. To accomplish this, all quotes from the category list were printed in hard-copy, and attached to an index card with a color-code that identified to which category that quote belonged. The purpose of using note-cards to organize data was two-fold: a) I thought it would be a concrete way of visualizing data. I could look at two separate quotes side-by-side, and think about their similarities and differences, and b) The Category List conveyed the feel that the categories were unchangeable. It was hard to see them as dynamic and constantly in flux. The note cards allowed me to physically move sections of text from one category to another, or compare categories and temporarily rename them. The note-cards were used most frequently during axial coding and the theory development process, and also during the writing of this manuscript when I needed to access the quotes that most accurately described a given category or phenomenon.

*Theoretical Coding and Theory Development.* Setting the stage for theory development required an identification and understanding of the team's theoretical framework. There are multiple ways of approaching a theory, ranging from positivist to interpretivist. A theory developed from the positivist perspective is one that seeks to predict relationships between variables, and emphasizes generalizability and universality (Charmaz, 2006). Consistent with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 of this manuscript, the theory in this study was developed from an interpretivist and constructivist perspective rather than positivist. According to Charmaz (2006), this

approach results in a theory that strongly emphasizes the lived experiences of the participants under examination, and allows for multiple realities to exist. Context is a crucial piece of an interpretivist or constructivist grounded theory, illustrating the notion that facts and values are inextricably linked through a nuanced and complex *process*. And finally, this perspective offers an “imaginative understanding” (p. 126) of the studied phenomenon. It is my hope that the theory presented in this manuscript is indicative of this theoretical framework, and exemplifies an understanding of the contextual worldview of the participants, and their overall belief systems regarding careers, achievement, and social class.

To begin the process of developing a meaningful theory from the data, the team first engaged in “Selective” or “Theoretical” coding. In this stage the team finally took the beginning steps toward developing an actual grounded *theory*. Before a theory can be developed, a “core category” is first identified, which is a central phenomenon around which all the other categories revolve (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Throughout the process of axial coding and determining theoretical saturation, the team kept the question of a “core category” in mind. By the time we finally met to discuss the development of our emergent model, several groupings of categories had been discussed as possible “core categories” around which the other categories might revolve. It was, however, ultimately a swift and unanimous decision to designate “Internalizing and Processing Career Criteria” (See Chapter 4, Results) as our Core theoretical group of categories. The team used the characteristics set forth by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to identify this core category group. There are multiple characteristics and criteria for a core category, including: 1) having analytical power—the ability to pull together the other categories in

order to produce an “explanatory whole” (p. 146), 2) appearing multiple times in the data, amidst the variability of individual participants, and 3) growth in explanatory depth and power when related to other categories. Our core categorical group, while certainly not the largest or most complex, was nonetheless the category that the team believed was the most significant and served as the point towards which every other category built. As it is described in both the results and discussion section, its explanatory power and its subsequent implications are theoretically meaningful.

In addition to the core category, the team developed three other major categorical groupings of theoretical importance. Each group of categories represents some significant process or belief system that emerged in the data as an integral part of the participants’ worldview. These major groups were developed and built upon throughout focused and axial coding, and endured many shifts, movements, and structural changes. The core categorical group as well as the other three major categorical groups will be discussed fully in Chapter 4, Results.

After identifying a core category, the team engaged in building a model for our studied phenomena. Because we had emphasized relationships, diagrams, and constant comparison throughout the analysis process, the theory-development phase was relatively swift. We engaged in the following process: We examined our existing diagrams, and then each team member was asked their views on how the three major category groups related both to each other and to the core category group. As each individual spoke, I sketched a possible model delineating the relationships between the 4 categorical groupings. As a team, we integrated these preliminary sketches into one, comprehensive sketch. Again, because our final four category groups were so saturated and had already

been represented in our visual diagrams, the process of integrating that data into a comprehensive whole was somewhat quick. As with all our diagrams, I took the sketch and developed a formalized model, and brought it back to show the team. In addition, we engaged in a final discussion wherein we considered the data to be sure that our model was indeed “grounded” in the experiences of the participants. It was unanimously approved, and we celebrated the completion of our grounded theoretical model.

#### *Researcher Role, Self-Reflexivity, and Auditing*

*Role of the Researcher.* Throughout the analysis, my goal was to fulfill a leadership role in which I was able to participate in the process, and still allow the team members to drive the decisions regarding appropriate code names and categories. In the beginning stages of coding and analysis in particular, my role during weekly team meetings was primarily that of a moderator. This was due to the fact that I conducted all of the interviews, and was therefore considerably more familiar with the literature on this topic. I was the team member who possessed the most vulnerability towards bias. My tasks in these early meetings consisted of taking notes on both the content of the meetings as well as the actual process, while also providing leadership and information to the team. If an additional perspective was needed in order to reach consensus, I provided my own input and coding feedback, since I had conducted my own independent analysis and coding of the data. Additionally, when the team required more in-depth information on an interview session, I provided some first-hand knowledge. And finally, I frequently helped the team develop actual names for the codes they developed. Because the team had little experience with the naming of qualitative codes and categories, they often looked to me for guidance on developing a concise yet descriptive concept or category

name. When this occurred, I summarized my understanding of the team's discussion, and then suggested a tentative name and asked for their feedback. We discussed possible names until consensus was reached.

As the team progressed towards axial and selective coding, I took a more active role in the development of categorical relationships and theory-development. This felt appropriate, given that I had the most extensive knowledge of this critical phase of the process. It was, however, crucial for me to maintain my commitment to constant self-reflexivity, so as to remain aware of the bias with which I enter the process of analysis.

*Researcher Experience.* As the primary researcher for this study, I had numerous experiences collecting data, several of which had been with high school populations. The researcher also had some experience conducting qualitative interviews for another research project, as well as some experience in transcription and coding. In addition, the researcher took coursework in qualitative research prior to the analysis, familiarized herself with procedures associated with grounded theory data analysis, and identified sources for consultation on qualitative data collection and analysis.

*Self-Reflexive Journals and Discussion.* Patton (2002) states that reflexivity calls for, "a willingness to consider how *who* one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field and as an observer and analyst"(p. 299). In qualitative research, this self-awareness component is critical, as it would be impossible for a researcher/observer/analyst to enter a study free from bias or pre-existing beliefs. Every researcher has his/her own unique worldview, and thus it is crucial (and in the spirit of qualitative research) to record one's reactions, feelings, and emotions during both data collection and analysis (Fassinger, 2005). This was particularly salient for me, as the

primary researcher, considering the content of this study. My personal socioeconomic background is most likely very similar to the backgrounds of the participants I interviewed, and thus it was imperative that I not assume their experiences to be the same as my own. It was crucial that I remain open to hearing and observing data that might run contrary to my own career search process, and how it was (or was not) affected by my social class background. It was determined that the best way to ensure that I was constantly aware of my biases would be to remain self-reflexive and honest, and to record my reactions so that I could refer back to my journal throughout the entirety of the research project.

In addition to the importance of my own self-reflexivity throughout the research process, it was equally important for the team members to maintain self-awareness of their own reactions to the interview content. As previously stated, the team members were therefore provided with a self-reflexive journal along with their other analysis materials. The function of the journal was for them to regularly record their reactions to interview material or perhaps discussions during the analysis process. The journal, however, was ultimately not the sole outlet for expressing reactions during analysis. Something that emerged quickly in the coding process was the apparent desire of the team members to talk during analysis meetings about their reactions or thoughts regarding the interview content. Furthermore, a byproduct of sharing their reactions to the interviewees was the inevitable sharing of their own personal Social Class backgrounds. From the beginning of this phenomenon, I did not discourage the discussion, as I felt it was important for each team member to be aware of her own personal biases, assumptions, reactions, and experiences. It is my belief that awareness is

heightened by verbal declaration, and for this reason the discussions of social class and personal reaction were encouraged. In addition, it was established early in the process that the team members each came from relatively different socioeconomic backgrounds, which added richness and complexity to the discussions. With each discussion, I encouraged the team to record their reactions in the self-reflective journals that I provided as well. I did not ask to see the journals at any point as they were meant to be confidential and personal. However, it seems that the most important thing was that they were processing these reactions, rather than sitting with the feelings and allowing them to subconsciously affect their coding process. As discussions naturally emerged, I listened and normalized, and even shared some of my own reactions as well. My rationale was that I wanted them to know I have reactions too, and that it is okay and appropriate to voice those reactions.

Each discussion was ended with the general message that it is okay to have reactions; the important thing is to be aware of them, and to continue trying to capture the lived experiences of these participants, despite their personal opinions, and despite their general “like” or “dislike” of each participant’s interview. Ultimately, the team built cohesiveness and rapport by engaging in these discussions, and the level of team reflection added an important level of awareness to the often vulnerable process of qualitative analysis.

*Auditing Procedures.* The process of “auditing” in grounded theory is loosely defined, but basically incorporates all phases of the research process that ensure the emergence of a model that is grounded in the data, that adheres to logical and acceptable procedures, and that acknowledges the fact that biases and personal worldviews are an

unavoidable part of the qualitative research process (Fassinger, 2005). The auditing that took place in this study encompasses all of these elements, accomplished through both external and internal procedures.

Auditing often includes external supervision and checking, sometimes called “inquiry auditing” (Fassinger, 2005, p. 163). This mode of auditing can focus on the content of the analyses, the process and procedures, or both. In this study, both were examined. In regard to the process and procedures, the doctoral committee and the dissertation proposal meeting is a form of auditing (Fassinger, 2005). In addition, individual members of the doctoral committee (the chair in particular) were consulted regarding various questions and updates on the process of data collection and analysis.

The *content* of the analysis was also audited externally. Upon completion of the theoretical model and final category list, results were sent to the one team member who had to leave at the end of the first semester of analysis. She was not a part of the final and most intensive phase of the analysis wherein we discussed saturation, developed final categories and models, engaged in selective coding, and finalized our grounded theoretical model. Her familiarity with the project and with the interview content was useful, as was her *absence* from these final stages which provided some distance and allowed her to be less immersed in the data when she conducted her audit. She was instructed to review our materials and simply provide feedback on whether or not the final model and category groupings made logical sense, whether or not they seemed “forced”, and whether or not the ending data seemed like a logical progression from the time when she left the research team.

In addition to these external modes of auditing, the team also engaged in numerous auditing mechanisms internally, as well. The purpose of having the team reach consensus regarding categories, diagrams, and a final model is to ensure that the emergent model is not the product of just one person. The team model itself is a form of auditing which prevents the final results from resting too much on the individual thoughts and biased judgment of the primary researcher (Fassinger, 2005). Additionally, the self-reflexive journals and discussion described above are a form of auditing as well. These procedures help to identify possible bias among the team and individuals, ultimately resulting in a better awareness of how our own worldviews may hinder the ability to capture the participants' lived experiences. And finally, a last form of auditing completed by me, the primary researcher, was simply the thoroughness of record-keeping. The "audit trail", as it is sometimes called, includes my detailed records of data collection, coding, category development, and model development. *The entirety of these records is provided for my committee members in the supplemental binder available in 16 Hill Hall.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The research team's grounded theory analysis resulted in numerous emergent phenomena. The categories and subsequent model presented in this section delineate the complex interplay between social class identity, achievement, career exploration, and the development of lifestyle and occupational values. The categories which represent these career-related phenomena are tightly woven into an integrated picture of the lived experiences of privileged young women. The overall structure of this Chapter is comprised of two primary sections: 1) Categorical Group Descriptions, which describe each category in detail, and 2) the Description of the Model, which ties the categories together and comments more specifically on the implications for career selection. A brief introduction to each of these major sections is provided, followed by the data that emerged in the analysis.

#### Emergent Categorical Groups of the "Model of Contextual Privilege and Career Selection in Adolescent White Women"

The categories presented in this section are those that reached theoretical saturation, as determined by team consensus. Thus, some initially developed categories were not included in the final model presented here because they lacked the depth, complexity, and thoroughness to achieve saturation (See Chapter 3, Methods). Such categories are important, however, to examine in the future and will be addressed in Chapter 5, the Discussion Section, in "Implications for Future Research".

Ultimately, four major groups of categories emerged, referred to hereafter as "Categorical Groups". The four Categorical Groups that emerged are: 1) Social Class

Worldview, 2) Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations, 3) Exposure and finally, 4) Internalizing Occupational Criteria. The latter-most categorical group was designated as the “Core Categorical Group” of the final model. Within the four Categorical Groups, a total of 30 saturated categories and subcategories emerged.

This section is organized around the four Categorical Groups listed above, and merely describes each category. The implications for career are described more fully in the Model Description, and in Chapter 5, Discussion. This section proceeds in the following manner: As an introduction to each of the four Categorical Groups, a brief descriptive field note is included, based on a single case example that represents many of the themes contained in the subsequent Categorical Group. These field notes (written in italics) are based on the original field notes taken by the researcher after conducting each interview, and include descriptive details and researcher reactions. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Following the field note is a brief introduction to the Categorical Group which sets the stage for the final component—a thorough description of each of the categories within the Categorical Group along with an identification of the various dimensions (sources of variability) within each category. Throughout the Results section, it may be useful to refer to Figure 1, which provides a condensed outline of the completed category list, as well as Figure 2, another version of the category list expressed in a chart format, along with a single representative quote from each category.

It is also necessary to define some final terms before proceeding with the category descriptions. Throughout the description of categories, some names/titles are described as the result of “In-Vivo” coding. This refers to the fact that a category name was taken

directly from the words of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When terminology or phrasing was used by multiple participants, the team preferred using their own words to name a given phenomenon.

Also, it may be helpful to keep in mind the meaning of certain notation throughout this section. Using as a model a published Grounded Theory study by Noonan, Gallor, Hensler-McGinnis, Fassinger, Wang, and Goodman (2004), words such as “usually, the majority, most of, typically, and many” are indicative of categories or events described by 7-10 of the participants. Words such as “several” and “a number of” indicate 5 to 6 participants. And “a few” or “some” refers to less than five of the participants. Often, the exact number being referenced is specified, as in “one participant”.

And finally, it should be noted that brackets are frequently used in the various quotes. Brackets indicate places where a word was replaced in order to protect participant confidentiality, or to provide clarification regarding a term used earlier in the interview.

Figure 1. Category List Outline.

**Social Class Worldview:**

- A. Social Class Identity
  - 1. Compared to the “Elite”
  - 2. Awareness of Privilege
    - a. Humility
- B. Social Class Knowledge and Beliefs
  - 1. Perceived Indicators of Wealth
    - a. Deceptive Indicators
  - 2. Life Outside St. Charles

**Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations:**

- A. Expectations
  - 1. Expectations from Others
  - 2. Desire to Excel (Self)
- B. Achievement Outcomes
  - 1. Consequences of Pressure and Competition
  - 2. Worth it; Waste it
- C. Mechanisms for Achievement
  - 1. Planning Ahead
    - a. Career First
  - 2. Climbing the Ladder
    - a. Too Risky

**Exposure:**

- A. Exposure to Occupational Information
  - 1. Outside Opportunities
  - 2. Self-Identified Sources of Occupational Info
  - 3. Father Modeling
- B. Exposure to Values
  - 1. Parental Modeling
  - 2. Observation of Others’ Values/ Choices

**Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria:**

- A. Processing Verbal Feedback
  - 1. Processing Career-Related Feedback
- B. Self-Reported Career Criteria
  - 1. Fear of Being Stuck
  - 2. Salary
  - 3. Enjoyment
  - 4. Balance
  - 5. Time for Family
  - 6. Providing Private Education
  - 7. Travel/Living Abroad
  - 8. Service/Charity
- C. Struggling with Value Conflicts

Figure 2. Chart of Categories, Social Class Worldview

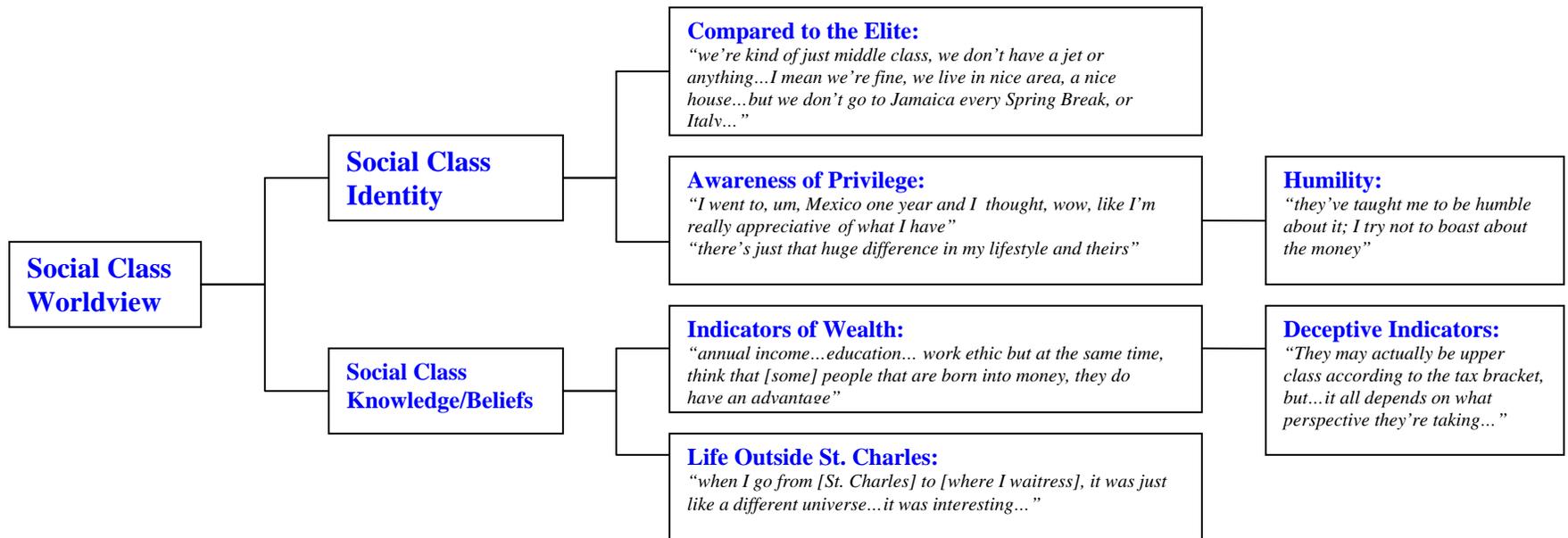


Figure 2 cont. Chart of Categories, Shared Perceptions of Achievement

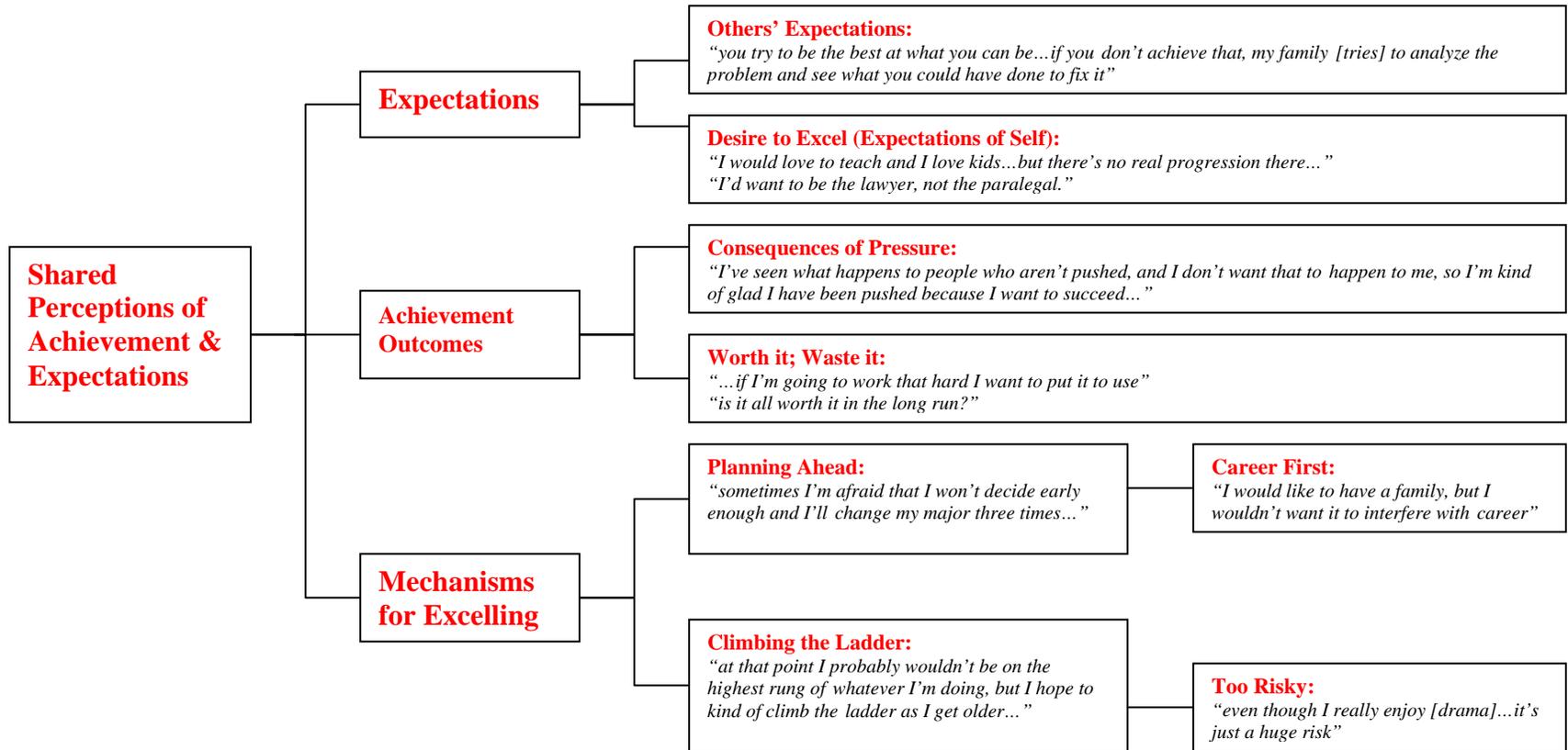
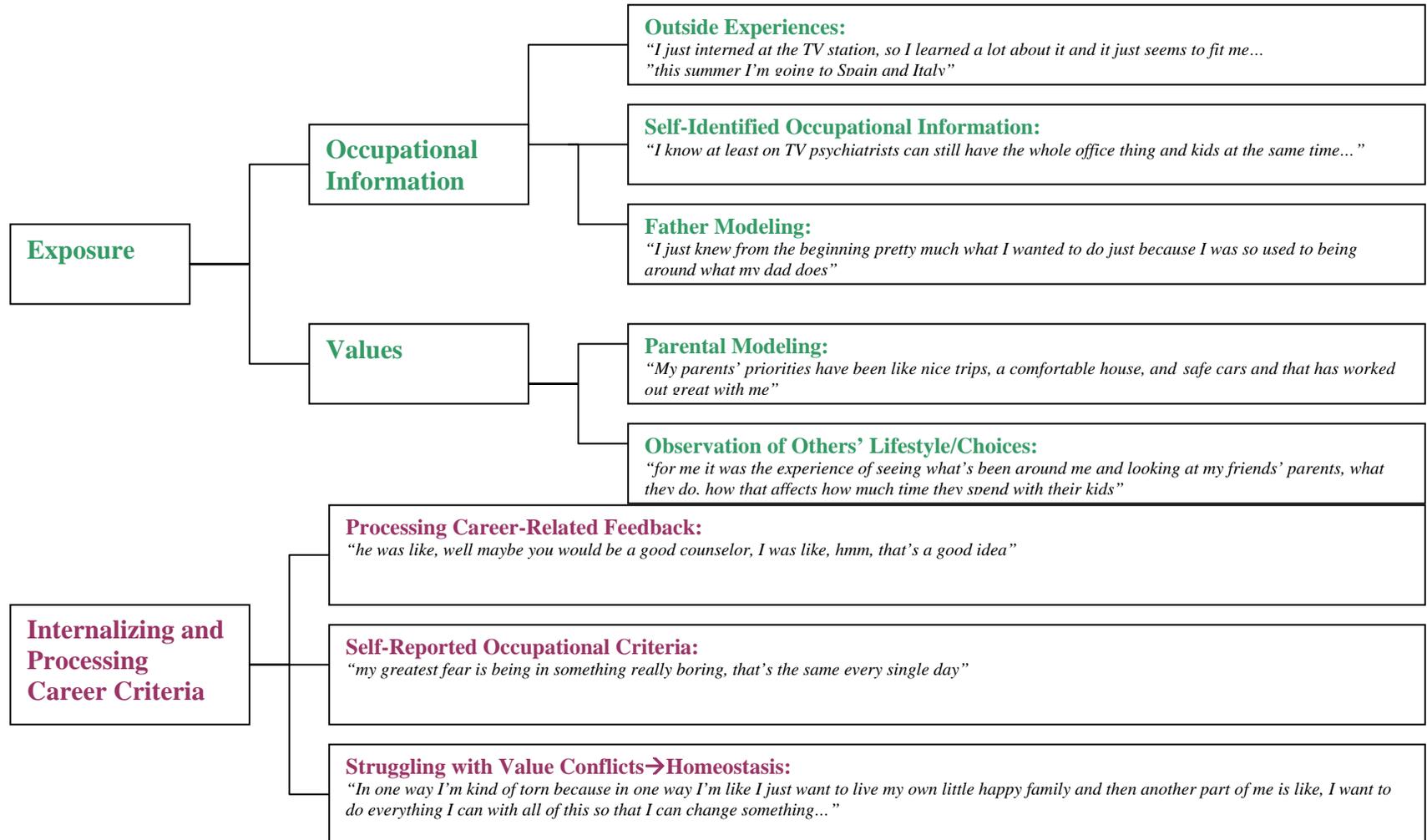


Figure 2 cont. Chart of Categories, Exposure & Internalizing and Processing Career Criteria



### *Category Group #1: Social Class Worldview*

*“Jane”*

*This is my first interview. I nervously approach a gated community in Mid-town, one that I've driven past many times, but have never had reason to enter. After a brief interaction with a security guard, I pull up to a large, welcoming home with a trickling fountain in front. Jane answers the door wearing what looks like pajamas, yet still manages to convey a great deal of style. She is quiet, unassuming, and her entire presentation screams, “I'm laid-back”. As we enter the house I begin to realize just how enormous it is. I step over the housekeeper's vacuum cord, walk through some shiny French doors, past a lap pool, and into a smaller building attached to the house. We walk up some stairs, and settle ourselves on a comfortable sofa and face each other. I quickly learn that Jane can't wait to start this interview; she has much to say, and she is ready.*

*Jane knows she is wealthy. Future participants staunchly adhere to their identity as “middle class”, but Jane is very aware she is not. Amidst her discussion of skills, interests, colleges, and occupational possibilities, there is a basic refrain: I am privileged, and I don't deserve it. What can I do to contribute to this world? How can I help? She considers direct service, and she considers funding philanthropic ventures. She describes mission trips, tutoring less privileged students, working at Head Start, and spending time with a foster child when she was younger. Her destination after our interview? Volunteering at a blood drive. Yet despite Jane's obvious commitment to service and charity, she is struggling with her career choice. She loves her life, her home, her parents, her school and her privilege. She doesn't want to give it up. She wants to give the same things to her future children. And yet her desire to “help others” is consuming. For Jane, privilege means responsibility. Her Social Class Identity, and her view of the class hierarchy in general, shapes her decisions, her aspirations, and her values. Perhaps more than any other participant, Jane's “Social Class Worldview” guides her as she approaches career selection.*

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The categories within this Categorical Group represent the various phenomena that capture some, though not all, elements of Social Class Worldview as it is defined in Chapter 2. The team debated whether or not this Categorical Group should receive the same title as a previously defined theoretical construct. However, a repeat inspection of Liu et al.'s (2004) definition revealed components that the team felt corresponded to the lived experiences emerging from the data. This Categorical Group contains two major

components: 1) The participants' Social Class Identity, and 2) The participants' knowledge and beliefs regarding Social Class in general.

*Social Class Identity.*

In every interview, participants were asked to place themselves in their perceived social class hierarchy. While none seemed comfortable with the question, for some it was still a relatively easy task. For others, more thought and verbal reasoning was required. The entirety of the participants viewed their social class status being somewhere in the middle or upper class, but also perceived many nuances of these class distinctions. The team pooled these self-referential and cognitive processes under the title "Social Class Identity". This sub-section of the larger "Social Class Worldview" Group consists of two categories and one sub-category, described in detail below.

*"Compared to the Elite"*. For most participants, the best way to determine one's status in the complex social hierarchy was to use comparison. This process of comparing oneself to others almost exclusively occurred in one direction—up. A category thus began to emerge, capturing how the participants used the classes above them as an anchor, a point from which they could delineate their own, unique social class status. This is significant, because these "anchor points" were often represented by the richest and wealthiest peers they could reference. Because their reality is one in which some peers' families own jets and live in mansions, their definition of "rich" is similarly extreme. It is with these extreme cases in mind that many participants used comparison to describe their place in the social class hierarchy. The word "Elite" in the title refers to the in-vivo term used by some participants to designate the wealthy class of individuals above them.

The varying dimensions of this category derive from the apparent objective or goal of using the comparison. In other words, what point or class identification is the participant trying to illustrate by using a comparison to someone she perceives as wealthier? As may be expected, a few of the participants used comparisons in order to demonstrate their relative *lack* of wealth. For example, one participant used comparisons to illustrate why she, herself, is “not rich”.

I worked at [a restaurant] downtown and one of the guys I worked with...he’s like, so, I hear you’re pretty rich, and I said, oh, well, we’re kind of just middle class, we don’t have a jet or anything...I do NOT think of us as rich.

This young woman continued to specify that “rich” is a label reserved for jet-owners and peers who have “a \$30,000 car” or who “go to Jamaica every Spring Break, or Italy”, justifying why she, herself, is “middle class”. This method of comparison, however, was also utilized by two participants who identified themselves in the upper class. One of these participants explained that while she may be upper class, there are others that have much more, stating, “we don’t have an island...there are a couple people that graduated last year that have an island.” Another self-defined upper-class participant introduced another dimension to this comparison by expressing the belief that great wealth is exemplified more through attitude than material possessions. She elaborated on this distinction, saying,

...we go to the ballets and operas and...I know my Dad donates money to those things. And there are always like the parties...the people who [donate] know each other. But my family...we don’t really like that stuff. We just donate because we actually like the ballets and operas. So I think that kinda makes us...in the lower upper because we don’t really do it *for* the status. It’s for helping people.

It is therefore important to her that she differentiate between the various levels of upper class—a distinction she makes partly via one’s attitude towards the arts, and one’s degree of social posturing.

One final dimension of comparison came from a participant who used the comparison to elite wealth in order to describe why she, herself, *does* associate with a “wealthy” social class status. She stated,

...the way I’ve been raised, I’ve been in like that elite class because...I went to school with the Walton’s, I mean they practically own the world...so I’ve always been surrounded by ideas of elitism and...always strive to be the best, I mean there’s nothing above you, I guess...

In this case, the participant uses comparison not to explain a *lack* of extreme wealth, but rather as a mode of associating and aligning with an “elite” class grouping. For her, it seems class is, in part, a state of mind.

For each of these participants described, there is a degree of wealth that they perceive as somewhat beyond them, and as the reason that most of them feel they cannot confidently call themselves “rich”. Their worldview of the upper class is nuanced and divided. Jets, islands, luxury cars and even psychological states of mind serve as the dividing line between mere wealth, and the social elite. The use of comparison is a mechanism through which these young women determine their own sense of social class identity.

“*Awareness of Privilege*”. While the previous category describes how the participants often focused on people with *more* wealth, they also expressed in their interviews an awareness of their own privilege, which became another important source of social class identity. Regardless of their placement in the social class hierarchy, the majority of the participants referred indirectly to multiple sources of privilege and social

capital. And several of the participants did perceive themselves as possessing some element of privilege, mentioned briefly without much extrapolation. Some of the participants, however, seemed to have a more acute understanding of their level of both material and experiential privilege. These cases were grouped under the title “Awareness of Privilege” because they conveyed a conscious acknowledgement of how privilege exists in their lives, and in the lives of their peers and friends.

This awareness of privilege ranged dimensionally from a simple awareness or “fact of life”, to a more acute and guilt-ridden awareness, and even shame or embarrassment. For one participant, for example, her privilege and the privilege of those around her is an undisputed reality—an undeniable part of every day life.

[Our school] is pretty elite...just being completely honest, everyone that goes there is like well off unless they're on scholarship, I mean, just go to the parking lot, it's kind of sickening almost, but, there are some amazing cars and stuff...it's just kind of one of those facts of life, you just have to accept it, I guess.

And while for this young woman the parking lot was a note-worthy symbol of her surrounding privilege, another participant perceived such material privilege as a source of shame. The shame seemed to originate not from possessing the privilege itself, but rather for doing nothing to deserve it. She described her sense of embarrassment when other—less fortunate—individuals have come into contact with her privilege.

when [a girl I was tutoring] would come over to my house or I would pick her up in my car, I was just kind of like, you know, ashamed of it, because I know that I haven't done anything more than she had to get, to drive what I drive... it's like when I would go to [volunteer at] Head Start, I would almost be ashamed to park in the parking lot... like when I park there I'm just looking around...I don't deserve this, why do I have this?

For her, there is a desire to hide her wealth, and a sense of guilt over the possessions she feels she did not earn.

Overall, the participants seemed aware that while they may not be “elite”, their social world is one that is associated with privilege and opportunity, and is not typical of the majority of the world. The degree to which each participant associated herself with this privilege varied, but all seemed to maintain some sense that their experiences, and the experiences of their friends, are unique.

“*Humility*”. For a few participants, there was yet another nuance to their “awareness of privilege” that seemed to necessitate a separate sub-category. These participants relayed various social norms dictating how one should present herself as it pertains to the possession of wealth. According to these young women, the rules are fairly straightforward. Your social class status may be obvious, but you should *never* talk about it. One of the participants to label herself “upper class” learned these rules from her parents, who taught her, “to be like, humble about it...at least, not to boast about, like the money...” She goes on to explain that at St. Charles, “[you] obviously don’t gain many friends that way.” Regardless of her status, boasting is an unattractive violation of social norms. In fact, this particular participant began adhering to these rules in the midst of the interview itself, becoming uncomfortable and explaining, “I’m just saying [I’m upper class] cause I’m in an interview, I wouldn’t like tell someone that...I want you to know that...”

Another young woman conveyed a similar sentiment, relaying a story in which a coworker at a restaurant called her “rich”. Her response was one that also demonstrated the discomfort associated with others publicly acknowledging sources of privilege. “I did kind of try to cover it up a little, but I was like well we’re not rich...I just felt kind of funny that he said that because it really wasn’t true and I didn’t want to give the

perception that I was if I wasn't..." In this case, the participant felt discomfort related to the possibility that she might be contributing to an image of "rich", despite her belief that she is simply middle class. This belief that "compared to others" she has only average wealth has been addressed in categories above. That process of comparison seems directly related to the expected display of humility. It is necessary to downplay one's wealth, when it is highly possible there is another student nearby with much more wealth to her name. One participant perfectly expressed this rationale, saying, "[my parents] don't show [our money] off, I wouldn't like that, I would die if my parents like, showed off...money, because obviously compared to a lot of families at St. Charles we don't have much..."

#### *Social Class Knowledge and Beliefs*

In addition to the self-referential data provided in the "Social Class Identity" categories, the participants also described numerous beliefs regarding social class that were more externalized. This sub-section of "Social Class Worldview" includes categories that describe the participants' self-reported strategies for making social class judgments, as well as their overall perception of classes outside their own. The following two categories and one sub-category below comprise the participants' "Social Class Knowledge and Beliefs".

*"Perceived Indicators of Wealth"*. While it was often uncomfortable to speak of their own social class identity and background, the participants had substantially less trouble externalizing their social class beliefs. This was especially true when asked to communicate their criteria for placing an individual in the upper class, or identifying others as "rich". Their responses to this inquiry created a comprehensive category with

many sources of variability and dimensional differences. The category name, “Perceived Indicators of Wealth”, conveys that these quotes very much focus on identifying *wealth*. Subsequent categories will attend to their worldview of lower social class backgrounds.

As mentioned, the dimensions of this category stem from the range of responses given to the question, “How can I tell if someone is rich?” The responses varied on two spectra: tangible to behavioral, and visible to covert.

Several participants began their list of upper-class criteria with a mention of material items—cars, homes, clothes, purses, and other concrete indicators. Material goods are also very much observable, visible indicators of wealth. Thus, the possession of material items falls on the two categorical dimensions as “Tangible” and “Visible”. Among the material items mentioned, “cars” were certainly one of the most frequent. The participants seemed very aware of the school parking lot, and used this as an indicator of their peers’ wealth. While most participants simply mentioned cars as an indicator, one young woman proceeded to explain that these possessions ultimately create social groups at school, and traced this phenomenon to the wealth of the parents. She stated,

I think maybe when you’re at a young age your parents kind of...make friends with the people who are kind of at their same, I guess, level, and then you kind of become friends with their friends maybe, because we’re in groups like...the people that drive the, like the Camry and...the Corolla, like they don’t drive a Landrover 4-Runner, Infinity or something, [they] almost kind of [stay] together.

Therefore, in her worldview, her peers naturally group together based on material possessions, and thus social class.

A somewhat more behavioral but also very observable indicator of wealth according to the participants was parents’ occupation. For example, one participant

explains, “if you say, oh my dad’s a cardiologist, people automatically sense that she’s rich.” Related to occupation is the education level of the parents, an indicator that is perhaps more hidden, yet still enormously important in detecting wealth. Education was frequently mentioned hand-in-hand with occupation, and applied to both education received, as well as the “education standards” that the parents maintain for their children. Tied to occupation and educational achievement was another behavioral yet even more covert indicator of wealth—work ethic. As one participant states, “I think a lot of it has to do with work ethic and how hard you’re willing to work...”

Of course, all the indicators listed thus far are inextricably linked to one final indicator—income. Not a single participant failed to mention income as a basic indicator of wealth, although many stipulations were placed on the conclusions one can draw about another’s social class if looking only at income. First of all, it seems that income is another tangible indicator of wealth—one either has it, or one does not. A few participants specified that this income comes from two possible sources: an individual’s occupational earnings, or inheritance. One participant explains that some people, “...are born into money, they do have an advantage.” Income also appeared to be a fairly visible indicator to these young women, regardless of one’s status as “old” or “new” money. One participant stated, “people tend to know...who’s like the old money and all that kind of thing...everybody’s families kind of know each other...” Regardless of the source of the income, it is relatively visible.

While income may be a tangible and visible indicator of wealth, it is also, apparently, highly vulnerable. A final social class indicator mentioned with almost total consensus among the participants was “spending habits”, a very covert and behavioral

indicator that has the ability (in their view) to significantly alter an individual's social class status. Without wise spending habits to accompany it, income can very quickly cease to indicate wealth at all. One participant had an example to share regarding the tenuous nature of high income.

I know this family...they inherited a lot of money...they just kept spending it and spending it... they lost all their money and they went bankrupt and so I guess their spending habits really effected how they live now, they're kind of poor now.

Her example illustrates the point made by the majority of these young women—that wealth alone is not enough. Wise spending ensures the survival of one's income.

Overall, the way these participants determine the wealth of their peers varies substantially. The indicators are visible and invisible, tangible and behavioral. The indicators described above are those that were mentioned the most frequently, and which therefore establish some common norms for determining when one can confidently state "They're rich."

*Deceptive Indicators.* The category above captures many of the various indicators of wealth listed by the participants. The nuances of that final indicator, "income", point to a complexity in the process of determining another's social class background. Participants spoke to that complexity throughout the course of their interviews, pointing to the common belief that the traditional indicators of wealth are frequently misleading. This resulting sub-category to "Indicators of Wealth" includes data from participants who observed that some social class indicators are not always reliable, with some ultimately concluding that wealth is determined by others' perceptions, rather than an objective reality. Hence the title of this sub-category became, "Deceptive Indicators".

Some participants who described this phenomenon tended to make the observation immediately after listing a possible social class indicator. “Material possessions”, for example, was one indicator that the participants seemed to believe was particularly fraught with the potential to mislead. As one participant observes, “[someone] might drive a really poor car and everybody thinks they’re really poor but they could be really rich...you kind of never know...”

Another participant made the similar observation that appearances can often be deceiving. In her case, that observation led to a more global comment on the importance of others’ perceptions in the determination of social class.

...if you’re going by other people’s perception of what class they’re in, I mean, they may actually be upper class according to the tax bracket they’re in, but other people may not think of them as upper class, so I think...it just depends on what perspective they’re taking.

So while income and possessions are important, for this young woman the ultimate determining factor is the *perception* as defined by others. Another participant took a similar view, also attributing a great deal of importance to the perception of others. And yet she, too, took this phenomenon one step further, hypothesizing where those perceptions are originally formed—through society. She says,

I think that determining the social class isn’t done by yourself, it’s done by society around you and, I think they have...ideas in their head of if you have a certain occupation then you will be in a certain class and so it’s almost pre-decided, I think, it’s predetermined by the generations before you and so I think what it comes down to is, society chooses [your social class] for you, you can’t really choose what class you’re in.

This is indeed a powerful statement on the way in which wealth is observed and determined in the world of these participants. For them, income, possessions, occupation, and education are only individual pieces of an overall puzzle. The process of

determining an individual's wealth is intricate and subjective. It involves both stable and unstable indicators, and is very much a product of others' perceptions.

*Life Outside St. Charles.* The participants' worldview regarding the complex, nuanced, and tenuous structure of the upper middle class and beyond has been described in the categories above. If their perceptions regarding wealth are by-products of their immersion in a privileged world, what is their perception of the classes below them? The references made to this slice of society fused into a category all their own. "Life Outside St. Charles" refers to the participants' perceptions of the social class world that exists beyond their high-school walls. A number of the participants had some beliefs about this other world, and the dimensions of this category correspond with levels of thought, awareness, and detail regarding those lower social class backgrounds.

It should be noted that when describing lower social classes, the participants largely drew from their experiences doing volunteer or mission work with underprivileged populations. This will be addressed more in the model description and the discussion, but is useful to keep in mind throughout their worldview descriptions.

A few participants relayed their knowledge of other social classes simply through describing our country's social class structure. Overall, the perceptions and knowledge paint a dim picture. In the participants' view, a low social class status appears to be synonymous with two primary modes of living conditions: poverty or factories. This is exemplified through one participant who described the overall class structure of our country. She explained, "...there are the elites, the intellectuals...the upper middle class, middle class and then the blue collar workers, like the factory workers and all, and then the impoverished." For her, "blue-collar" is equated only with factories. When one

moves beyond the middle class, the range of incomes is fairly dichotomous. Another participant simplified the class structure even further. When asked about her associations with social class, she replied, “rich and ghetto”. Thus, for the participants who chose to describe a social class structure, anything below either “rich” or middle class seems reduced to factory labor, poverty, or the “ghetto”.

A second group of participants ascribed qualitative differences to individuals from lower social class backgrounds. One participant explained that the college town to which she was planning to move has two types of people: the intellectuals who associate with the University, and the “bottom half” who “don’t know what they’re talking about”. Another participant chose to define lower classes via education as well, describing one of her tutoring experiences and stating, “I would see these kids’ parents pick em up in their Taco Bell outfit or their, you know, janitor t-shirt or whatever, picking up their kids and you could tell...that their parents hadn’t been reading to them.” Thus, her view of a fast-food working-class individual is one who, for whatever reason, cannot or will not read to his/her child.

In sum, the worldview of these participants is that “Life Outside St. Charles” is a tough one, and one in which education is lacking and there is little that separates the middle class from the harshness of poverty. One participant perhaps captures it best, describing her experience working as a waitress at a downtown restaurant. She says, “...when I go from there to work...it was just like a different universe, it was interesting...”

*Categorical Group #2: Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations*

*“Libby”*

*Libby is still wearing her school uniform when she opens the door. Her smile is huge and her manners impeccable. She is warm and friendly; I like her immediately. Her home is more modest than some of the others, yet rests on the edge of some of the town's more expensive neighborhoods. She identifies strongly as "middle class", yet is clearly surrounded by wealth.*

*Like Jane, Libby is excited about the interview; it becomes clear that this is not the first time she has discussed her career path. She launches into a description of her goals and her internal thought process. She is loquacious and enthusiastic and conveys a naïve sweetness while she talks about her dreams for the future. She talks about travel, about learning, and seeing new places. And then, something changes. About half-way through the interview, Libby's affect begins to alter. I have just asked her about pressure and expectations. Does she feel pressure? What kinds of expectations do others have of her?*

*An intensity gradually emerges from beneath Libby's bubbly exterior. Expectations, she explains, are necessary. She knows what happens to people who don't experience pressure or expectations—they don't achieve. They become waitresses...or homemakers. This, she tells me, is simply not an option. Her voice picks up speed as she tells me it's hard when she feels like she might disappoint people. But she's an achiever—a "serious student". She can't let people down. She can't let herself down. And besides, why would she want to pursue a career that doesn't put all this hard work to use? That would be a waste.*

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Numerous questions in the interview protocol focused on the participants' career aspirations, as well as their perception of what others might expect them to choose as a future occupation. From these questions emerged an entire Categorical Group of responses that spoke volumes about the participants' beliefs regarding the path to achievement, as well as the many expectations for such achievement. The participants went on to explain what might happen to individuals who fail to meet those expectations for achievement. The resulting Categorical Group is broken into three sections: 1) Expectations for Achievement, 2) Achievement Outcomes, and 3) Mechanisms for "Excelling". Throughout this Categorical Group, it may be helpful to refer to Figure 3 which presents a flow-chart of the participants' "Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations."

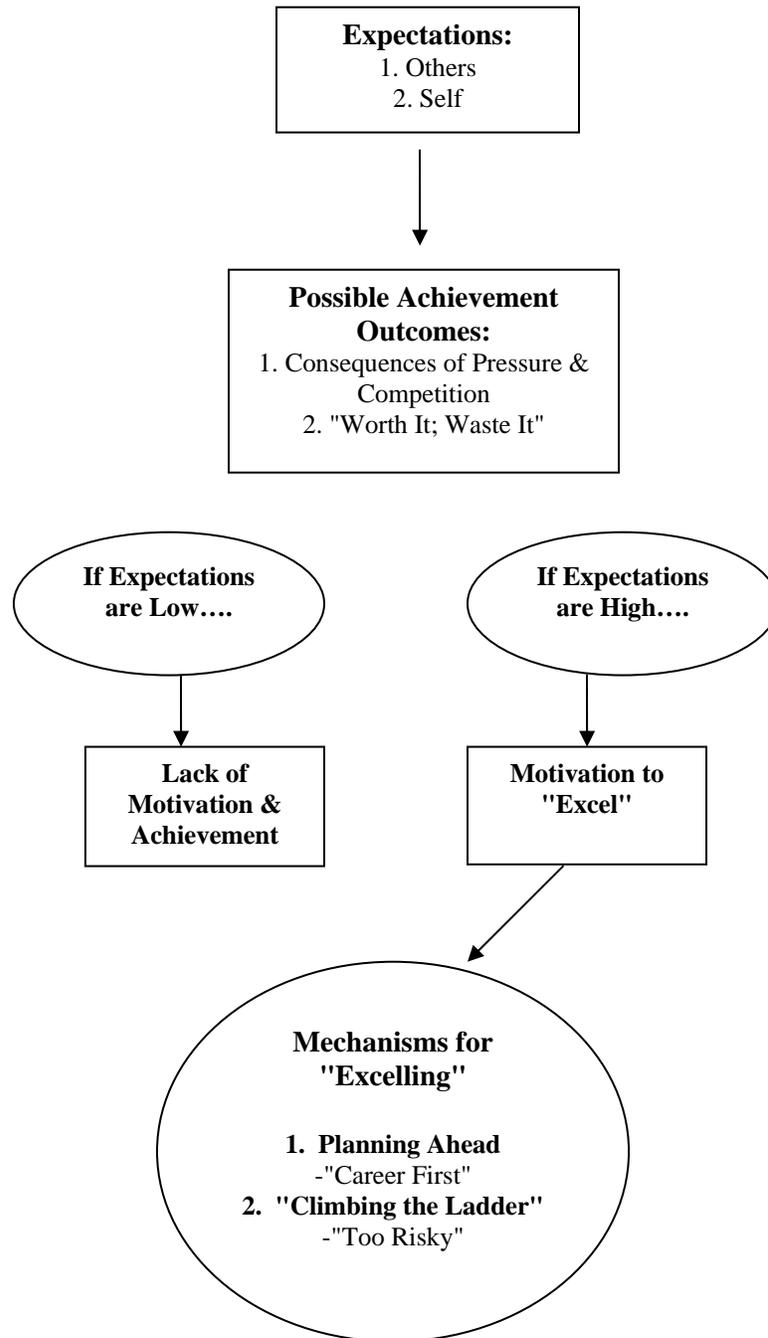
### *Expectations for Achievement*

The first section of this overall Categorical Group contains two categories which describe the expectations for achievement that the young women perceive. These expectations involve expectations for school and academics, career, and achievement in general. And, as is indicated below, the expectations have two major sources: others, and themselves.

*Others' Expectations.* While the participants in this study may vary in their history of achievement or their GPA's, many share at least one commonality: there are others in their lives who "expect" success. It is important to note the use of the word "expectations" in this particular category. The participants rarely spoke of "pressure"...except in order to *deny* that they felt "pressure" from parents or other people in their lives. In fact, many participants stated very directly that their parents—while encouraging—did not pressure them to succeed. Thus, a more appropriate term for their lived experience was "expectation", which captures the participants' awareness that others—parents, teachers, friends—hold some beliefs about the achievement they expect from these young women.

As might be expected, parents were a significant source of expectations for a few of the participants. One participant was quick to point out that her parents did not pressure her (as did several participants), although she might be *rewarded* for good grades or achievement. So while she may not have felt her parents' expectations weighing quite as heavy, there were still some expectations that—when met—were rewarded monetarily. At the other end of the spectrum, some participants reported a more acute awareness of their parents' expectations for achievement. One participant,

Figure 3. Flow-chart for “Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations”.



for example, stated very matter-of-factly,

My parents have always been, there wasn't ever a question of just getting by...getting an A was, that was what you had to get and if you fell below that, [then] you had to work up to it...if you don't achieve that...they're not going to be like, oh my gosh, you're grounded...they try to analyze the problem and see what you could have done to fix it.

For this young woman, achievement does not mean average; it means reaching the top.

Her perception (which comes partly from her parents) is that a lack of superior achievement may not be a cause for punishment, but it *is* a problem to be fixed.

The expectation of success and achievement came from other sources as well, such as teachers, school administrators, and peers. For some participants, the expectations seemed relatively benign. They simply had friends who expected them to pursue various occupations, or teachers who expected them to achieve success if they held a goal or desire. But for others, the expectations had stronger implications. Thus, a final dimension of expectations comes from the discomfort associated when the girls failed to meet expectations of others. This was particularly true of the participants who identified as highly achieving individuals. Especially with these young women, the *perception* of others' expectations was powerful. Because they achieved in the past, they believe others expect them to continue achieving similarly, and experience extreme discomfort when they fail to meet those perceived expectations. One participant, for example, recalls her disappointment when she failed to become a National Merit finalist. "...it seemed like [teachers and administrators] were thinking that I was really going to score high and then I didn't, and it hurt..." Another participant provided a more thorough description of the relationship between this perceived pressure and the sense of disappointment when one fails to meet those expectations.

I do well in school and I'm one of the top in my grade, so people really do expect something from me...it's not, like, oh if you do bad we're not going to be friends with you...but they expect me to do well and I'm sometimes afraid of disappointing them...if I don't [do well], I feel really bad...

The participants are very much aware of what others expect from them. They may vary in their beliefs about the intensity of those expectations, and they also vary in their reaction when they fail to meet those expectations. The existence of expectations, however, is a significant component of their worldview and their beliefs regarding achievement and academic success.

*“Desire to Excel” (Expectations of Self).* As the data began to paint a comprehensive picture of the various sources of pressure imposed upon these young women, another primary source of pressure and expectations for academic and occupational achievement emerged—the participants themselves. As one participant said, “I’m pressured more so by myself than anyone else... not achieving the goals I’ve set for myself is bigger than not achieving the goals my parents have set for [me].”

The manner in which this self-expectation materialized from the data was best captured through the frequently used in-vivo term, “Excel”, and the category was thus named, “Desire to Excel”. This captures the idea that the participants not only wanted to find a career in which they could succeed; they were invested in finding a career that would allow them to keep “excelling” until they reached the top of that chosen occupational field. The “desire to excel” was a general expectation of any career, as exemplified by one participant who stated, “...when I see myself in a career I always envision myself being extremely successful in that career and prominent in the field.” The participants may lack any clear mental picture of their aspired occupation, but what they *do* know is that they will excel.

When discussing specific occupations during the interviews, the participants frequently used the potential to excel as criteria for whether they discarded or considered the given occupation. Occupations were frequently not considered due to their lack of ability to excel within that career. “I don’t know, I struggle with teaching, cause I would love to teach and I love kids, but...once you’re teaching...there’s no really progression there.” While this logically discounted seemingly low-status occupations like secretary for some participants, others were still able to imagine themselves in the secretarial field, as long as it left room to excel at the top of that field. One participant, for example, responded to the question of being a secretary by saying, “hmmm, it would depend...secretary, for like Donald Trump?”

A final dimension to this category arose when two occupations were presented in the same overall professional field. In these cases, the participants frequently aspired to the higher-status occupation that was indicative of more school, more training, and more excelling. In the medical field, for example, participants who could imagine being a doctor often could *not* imagine being a nurse. One participant exemplifies this attitude, rejecting the thought of being a nurse because, “the doctor is superior to the nurse, and...like the women who can’t become doctors become nurses and...I reject that, I want to be the best.” Another participant responded similarly when asked a parallel occupational question from the legal profession. When asked if she would consider being a paralegal, her facial expression took on a confused look before she replied, “I don’t know; I’d want to be the lawyer, not the paralegal.”

In summary, this category exemplifies the number of expectations these young women hold for themselves. There is variability in their willingness to consider various

fields of occupations, but there is commonality in their desire and expectation to continue “excelling” until they reach the top of their chosen field.

### *Achievement Outcomes*

Just as the participants had many notions regarding the perceived expectations in their lives, so too did they hold beliefs regarding the consequences of those expectations. The following two categories represent the participants’ perceptions of the expectations they experience each day, as well as their reactions to the possibility of failing to “excel”.

*“Consequences of Pressure and Competition”*. Perhaps the most enlightening element in the overall analysis of expectations was the belief regarding the *consequences* of those expectations that emerged from the data. When discussing expectations and the pressure to achieve, there was relative consensus among the participants that pressure, when experienced, is not a problem. Rather, it is a desirable and advantageous by-product of their competitive academic environment. These young women seem to perceive pressure not as a burden to bear, but rather as a necessary driving force that instills the desire and motivation to succeed. It is what ultimately provides them the opportunity to meet their expectations for “excelling”. This category illuminates upon that relationship, and outlines the various consequences of pressure and competition perceived by these participants.

The participants described two processes whereby pressure yields motivation and achievement. One is at the level of high school achievement, and the other is at the level of occupational attainment. The first level, high school achievement, seems to derive from the school’s competitive atmosphere. The school is a place that maintains heavy expectations for achievement. As one participant stated, “...if you don’t do your best,

you don't belong here." A few of the participants described the norm of competing with their friends for the highest grades, and some placed themselves at an approximate "rank" in comparison to their classmates and friends. Such an awareness of each other's academic standing necessitates harder work, as one participant states, "...going to St. Charles I've had to work harder because it's not easy to be the best in such a competitive atmosphere..." Another young woman mentioned one of her good friends, saying, "she always does really well, so it kind of pushes me to do a little better." Ultimately, the end result of this level of competition is, according to the participants, an overall motivation for academic success and achievement. One participant encapsulated the connection between competition and achievement, stating, "there's something about St. Charles that makes you really ambitious...actually it's really competitive and I've always been secretly competing with my friends for the highest grade point and ultimately that did really good things for me." The young women largely perceive the competitive nature of the school as a *positive* impetus for achieving a high GPA, and succeeding academically.

The implications of pressure and competition do not, however, seem to end when the school awards its valedictorian. While some participants focused on high GPA and grades as a positive outcome of pressure, others looked beyond—toward occupational goals and attainment.

This was most apparent when the participants described other high school students who lack the opportunity to immerse themselves in a high-pressure, competitive academic environment. What becomes of them? One young woman contrasted the climate at her own school to the climate experienced by her public-school friends, where high school became a "big party". Her description of their experience made it clear that the lack of

expectations or focus on achievement seriously jeopardized their probability of occupational success. Another participant went so far as to describe a potential fate for those who lack expectations in their lives. “I think you need to be pushed a little bit and if you’re not pushed, I mean, I’ve seen what happens to people who aren’t pushed, and I don’t want that to happen to me, so I’m kind of glad I have been pushed because I want to succeed.” When elaborating on the specifics of “what happens” to these individuals, the participant identified waitressing as an example of the kind of occupation one can expect if he/she has not experienced the benefits of “being pushed”.

The participants varied in the value placed on this particular cause-effect link between pressure, motivation, competition and achievement. Some participants merely stated the relationship as a factual reality and as one of the reasons they pursued private education, while others placed an even higher value judgment, describing competition as a “healthy” means of driving an individual to achieve. It is unclear from the data where this message originates—school, friends, teachers, family, or some other source. Yet regardless of the source, it is a line of thinking common to many of these young women, and a unique way of thinking about consequences of stress and pressure.

“*Worth it; Waste it*”. Related to the achievement norms described already, the participants shared a common perception of the potential and undesirable *lack* of occupational achievement. At the root of their desire to excel, it seems that the several of the participants possess the belief that only the careers which meet their individual expectations would have made their talents, hard work, and opportunities “worth it”. And conversely, they believe that any career that falls short of their individual expectations for achievement would be a “waste”. These young women rarely if ever

used the word “failure” when reacting to the possibility of an undesired occupation. Rather, their focus was on the “wasteful” quality of settling for an occupation that fails to make their gifts and efforts “worth it”. The category name “Worth It; Waste it” originated from these in-vivo terms as the participants described this shared belief.

The variability within this category stems from the individual expectations of each young woman, and their individual definitions of what makes a career “worth it”. For some of the participants, “worth it” meant attaining a career that would allow them to utilize the prestigious education they received at St. Charles, as well as the education they expect to receive in college, and in some cases graduate/professional school. Thus, when presented with the suggestion of a career (e.g. secretary) that does not “use” a college education, responses were largely negative with most indicating some variation of the following response: “there’s not a degree to be a secretary, so if you’re going to get a degree in something that would kind of be a waste of your time.” In a related vein, another participant focused on the pressure and toil they had undergone (and expected to endure) throughout their academic lives. She states,

I really have to see myself in the long run, like everything that goes into [college], all the variables that go into it, paying for college and like the tests it does on your family and yourself and mentally and physically, is it all worth it in the long run?

These young women simply want to be working towards something that justifies the very intense academic work they have experienced thus far, and which they plan to continue.

Another and somewhat unique definition of “worth it; waste it” came from one participant who held an intense awareness of her privilege. For this young woman, any occupation that failed to fully utilize her financial and experiential privilege would be a “waste”. She poignantly captured this mentality, saying,

I don't feel like I should [be in a career where I'm] just skating by because my parents have kind of made it to where I have the opportunity to not do that...I feel like I need to be a good kid and make good grades because of all this...it's a privilege to go to St. Charles...I am blessed to be at this school, so I better do something...

Her awareness of her own unique privilege instills the sense that she must use that privilege to obtain a career path that allows her to avoid “skating by”. Lower-middle class occupations might seem to her a “waste” of the opportunities she’s been provided.

While their individual values and motivations for achievement may vary, a consistent norm exists among them: an occupation that does not “use” education, resources, privilege, or hard work is—in their words—a waste.

#### *Mechanisms for Achievement*

It is clear from the categories described above that there are numerous expectations and beliefs regarding achievement, and what befalls young women who do *not* achieve or who lack the motivation to achieve. But assuming one does possess the necessary motivation, there are important steps on the way to “excelling”.

“*Planning Ahead*”. For these young women, “Planning” is a necessary step before one can properly “excel”. This attention to planning emerged as a norm among the participants; even the sophomores who were interviewed were able to describe some plan for their future, regardless of its level of realism.

Dimensions of this category arose from the level of planning each participant reported. In a few cases, participants expressed a level of decisiveness uncommon to some college students, much less high school students. When asked if she had decided on a college major yet, one participant replied, “yes, international relations with a concentration in pre-law, so, going to law school after that and then ideally get into

international criminal law...” The path to her chosen occupation had been laid, leaving little room for adjustment.

Some other participants had a similar long-term path decided upon, but with less specificity and more room for adjustment. One participant, for example, described her path as the following:

I’m gonna go to [college] and I want to do a like double-major. One in musical theater, and then something that has to do with like chemistry or physics or science...[I’d] like try to pursue...Broadway first, but maybe if that doesn’t work maybe get a job like in engineering or something, and then have a family.

While she may lack a detailed picture of her future career, she has nonetheless put thought into the practicality of her goals, and developed a plan that takes her well into adulthood.

Other participants had a still hazier vision of their path to occupational success; for them, the planning stage was more amorphous. “I have no set ideas, I’m hoping that I can go in the Liberal Arts direction and then after a year or two have a little bit better idea, um, but maybe...majoring in Liberal Arts and then working for a business” Again, there seems to be an awareness that plans may morph and change, but amidst her self-labeled flexibility, there is still a plan in the works—a liberal arts major, and a career in business.

While some participants were more comfortable outlining a somewhat circuitous route towards occupational achievement, every participant had some plan for her academic path, her occupational path, or her future lifestyle. One mechanism for excelling, therefore, seems to be the ability to plan for one’s imagined success.

“*Career First*”. This sub-category of “Planning Ahead” is an in-vivo descriptor of the participants’ overwhelming reaction when asked if they would consider being a

stay-at-home-Mom. The entirety of the participants who were asked about being a homemaker expressed the concrete goal of establishing a career before having children, and in some cases before marriage as well. The commonness of the language suggested that establishing “career first” is a standard expectation held by these young women, and that being a stay-at-home-Mom, while potentially acceptable in the future, is not an aspired occupation on its own. This shared belief is supported by one participant’s statements regarding her perception of her fellow female classmates: “...at least in my friends...one is going to be a doctor, one who wants to go into journalism, one who wants to go into archaeology, they all have specific career goals, none of my friends, at least, even, I don’t even think, consider [homemaker], as [an option].”

While the ultimate verdict “career first” was common to all participants, there was, however, a continuum in the intensity of the reaction. The young woman quoted above went on to describe a friend who had expressed a desire to marry and have children rather than go to college. Her response was one of incredulity, stating, “that’s not a career option, I just never, it just never entered my mind that people...just get married and don’t go to college”.

Other participants approached homemaking as a much more imaginable possibility, though not without some degree of trepidation. Some participants, while clear in their desire to establish a career *before* having children, did express that they might be willing to stay at home sometime in the future. The combination of career and family was mentioned only in two cases; most participants seemed to delay problem-solving this issue until a later time—for them, a time that remains in the distant future.

Ultimately, no common origin emerged for the belief in “career first”. For each individual, it may be due to practical considerations, social expectation, group norms, a lack of interest in homemaking, or some combination of all these factors. Yet, despite this variability, the bottom line remains constant: career comes first.

“*Climbing the Ladder*”. “Planning” is a mechanism for achievement that is largely driven by the individual. It is an internal process; either one engages in planning, or does not. Additional mechanisms for achievement emerged from the data that spoke of a similar source of control. The most poignant of these grew into a category which was given the in-vivo title, “Climbing the Ladder”. The content of this category delineates the participants’ beliefs regarding one’s ability to reach the ultimate goal of “excelling” via hard work and determination.

Within the data, three separate dimensions of “Climbing the Ladder” were described by participants. Several participants referenced this phenomenon, via one of these three approaches: 1) Exposure to Instances of “Climbing the Ladder”, 2) the Expectation of being able to “Climb the Ladder”, and 3) the *value* inherent in “Climbing the Ladder”.

“Exposure” to climbing the ladder refers to the participants who simply described people (usually their fathers) who had been able to attain status and prestige in their occupation through their hard work and effort. One participant describes the path to success in the financial world (her father’s field), saying,

I know just through my research and talking to people at Smith Barney, like you know, you don’t start off making very much money, and working for firms like Merrill Lynch, but once you’ve worked your way up the ladder and you’ve been working for a long time and build up your clientele that you can make quite a bit of money.

There's no inherent value judgment here—just a neutral description of how she envisions the mechanism that allowed her father to incrementally “climb” to the top of his profession.

Other participants spoke of this phenomenon more from the perspective that people *can* work their way to the top, and that consequently, they expected their career paths to follow a similar path. One participant, when asked to describe her life ten years into the future, states,

I think at that point I probably wouldn't be on the highest rung of whatever I'm doing, but I hope to kind of climb the ladder as I get older, I don't expect to be president when I'm 28, that's stupid...but I expect to be climbing and to definitely have some sort of steady career...

Thus the expectation of climbing to the top of a career field is a given for some of these young women. All that is required of them is a strong work ethic.

A final and powerful dimension of this category is the value that many of the participants placed on the process of working hard in order to climb this invisible ladder. This value judgment is particularly salient for these young women, who are exposed on a daily basis to extraordinary wealth and privilege. The participants used terms such as “old money” and “new money” with regularity, because this distinction is part of their reality and worldview. And when these terms were introduced, it was not without specifying that “new money” is the more revered path to wealth and success. One participant, after describing her father's success, declared, “I don't want to inherit his money, I want to [earn my way to the top].” The same participant described the value of being “self-made” as she spoke about her grandfather as well. “...my [grandfather] was an architect and they had, like no money, so, he was self-made, so that's nice seeing that,

the value of that...” And while many of the participants described the value of this process, one participant took her belief in “climbing the ladder” just one step further. “I just think that no matter what there has to be classes because it’s natural, it’s innate for a human to try to attain a better state, level than what they have and without that element in life, I don’t think it would work...” Her perception rested on the more extreme end of the spectrum, but is indicative of the extent to which the lived experience of these young women includes the expectation that hard work will enable them to excel. Furthermore, by achieving via hard work, they have taken the more admirable path to occupational success.

*“Too Risky”*. The previous category demonstrates the extent to which the participants believe in the process of working hard, and “climbing the ladder”. Yet despite their faith in this system, they also seemed to share an awareness that there are some occupations where the system breaks down—where luck and chance are part of success, and hard work is not necessarily the ticket to excelling. This common belief emerged as the participants talked about occupations in which they have a great deal of interest (exclusively artistic careers), but would be hesitant to pursue because of the “risk”. The resulting in-vivo title of this sub-category captures their response towards these “risky” careers.

The participants varied in the level of thought they had invested towards these particular careers; some seemed to approach risky occupations as just a day-dream, while others had engaged in significantly more thought and planning. One participant, for example, not only fantasized about going to Broadway to become an actress, but also had created a back-up plan for herself. She explained,

...if you move to NY it can be like 10 years before you get your break. And it's hard to live for those 10 years...I know you definitely *need* a fall-back plan and I know girls who don't have one and they're just like 'I'm going to Broadway' and I'm like 'Yeah, I definitely need a plan'...I *need* to go to college first.

This participant was unique because she actually did plan to pursue the risky career option. Yet her awareness of that risk encouraged her to prepare herself by first gaining a college education and the skills necessary for an alternate occupation.

Most of the participants who mentioned the desire for a risky occupation seemed to have far less intention of actually pursuing it. Rather, they preferred the idea of maintaining a hobby or side-job that would enable them to pursue their dream with far less risk. One participant who had an interest in fashion stated, "I'd love to go into fashion design...[but] it's such a crap shoot to get into...maybe I'll try that after I'm established or something...on the side, I don't want to risk it..." Such a plan allows her the ability to pursue her love of fashion, without the risk. A final participant, also highly interested in drama, exemplified the desire to avoid careers in which the process of "climbing the ladder" fails.

...even though I really enjoy [acting] and I do think it's a lot fun...it's just a huge risk, it's almost just luck of the draw who ends up kind of making it and I'm not really good with that, I like sure things, I like something that if I work for it, I get it...as long as I do the work...

This young woman's desire to excel in an occupation outweighs her desire to pursue a passion for acting. Overall, these young women are making practical decisions, to be sure, but their decisions also stem from a desire to be rewarded and excel.

### *Categorical Group #3: Exposure*

*"Melanie"*

*Melanie is one of the few interviewees who does not answer the door herself. She is, to say the least, preoccupied. I am greeted at the door by Melanie's mother who*

welcomes me graciously and offers me a drink. There's a palpable tenseness in the air that I cannot identify. The mother quietly explains to me, as if it's almost a secret, "It's college admission day", and I understand.

Melanie barely looks up from the computer when I enter the room, and I gather the impression that my presence is not wanted. Melanie's face is perfectly made up, her skin is perfectly tan, and she wears large hoop earrings. One of her lanky tan legs is pulled up into the chair with her, where she holds it with one arm. Her other leg dangles from the chair, and she is frowning. Her right hand is glued to the computer mouse. She begins talking, not really to me, but she does seem to be aware that I am, in fact, sitting next to her. I remind myself that whatever she's saying is important...the actual interview can wait. It turns out Melanie has been waitlisted at one of the multiple Ivy League schools on her application list. She found out just before I arrived. After 5 minutes of chatting about college admissions and the injustice of clogged computer networks, I decide to start the interview. I'll just begin and see how well she can focus. I'm not optimistic.

The interview is astounding. One moment she's glued to the computer, anticipating what I imagine she perceives as the key to her future, and the next she's facing me and rattling off pure philosophy regarding the nature of class and career. In the course of the 45 minute interview, she uses Russian literature to explain her interest in law, discusses capitalism and meritocracy, and fields two phone calls (one from Dad, one from boyfriend) regarding her college admissions. Sitting with her is anxiety-inducing, intense, and fascinating. I learn that this young woman has served as a congressional page and has attended academic summer programs at Stanford, Georgetown, and Berkeley. She attended (for multiple years) a summer camp where she skillfully produced Native American weavings which (almost on cue) she proudly displays during the interview. Melanie takes pride in her range of extracurricular experiences—in her self-initiative and efforts toward exposing herself to a world of thought outside her Midwestern high school. And Melanie's career aspirations reflect that range of experience. She draws upon her wealth of academic and nation-wide experiences when speaking of her career aspirations. And she draws upon the life her parents have shown her...their lifestyle, their values, and their own impressive career paths. Melanie is a prime example of the power of "Exposure".

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The previous two Categorical Groups demonstrated that the participants have awareness of social class issues, and beliefs about achievement in general. Both of these categories have strong implications for career choice. But how do the participants gather their information about occupational possibilities? This third categorical group, "Exposure" emerged as one answer to that question, incorporating data that includes the participants' observations of others, as well as their own personal experiences and modes

of exploration. This Categorical Group was titled “Exposure” in order to capture the breadth of these young women’s experiences and observations, both in regards to occupational *information* as well as occupational *values*.

#### *Exposure to Occupational Information*

The first three categories in “Exposure” all focus on the participants’ experiential opportunities to gather occupational information and learn about various career paths. These categories cover their own personal experiences, their observations of others, and also their observation of parental occupations, most notably their father’s.

*Outside Opportunities.* Throughout the analysis, one defining characteristic of these participants was the wealth of enrichment opportunities that they experienced outside the classroom. From vacations to internships, these young women have garnered numerous experiences that have the potential to inform their set of occupational information. The two dimensions of this category represent the two major types of opportunities described by the participants: 1) Travel in general and 2) Jobs, Camps, and Internships.

The first dimension requires little explanation, except to say that the travel experiences listed by these young women were, in many cases, atypical of the average high school student. Collectively, the participants had visited the following places: Spain, Italy, Africa, England, Alaska, Canada, Switzerland, Mexico, France, and multiple destinations throughout the United States. Some of these places were visited via school-sponsored trips, and some were visited on family vacations.

The second dimension has slightly more direct occupational relevance, as it includes the numerous examples of the career-enrichment opportunities the participants

had experienced. Many of these opportunities were internships, some of which fulfilled a requirement of the school but were nonetheless important in their ability to influence the participants' career information. One participant, aspiring to a career in medicine, described one of her internship experiences at a local hospital. "I also interned with a group of internists at [hospital], so it wasn't exactly what I thought it was...I saw kind the reality of what they do on a day to day basis and I did like it, but I may want to be more in research." Other participants had more affirming internship experiences, such as a young woman who interned at a local television station, and another who interned at a prominent financial/accounting firm. In addition to internships, other participants described opportunities such as summer programs at various Universities around the country, serving as a congressional page at the state capitol, mission trips and volunteer work in the US and abroad, and part-time jobs such as being a nanny or working as a waitress. In all these cases, the opportunity to witness a career possibility first-hand ultimately gave them more information from which to draw when making their own occupational choices.

*Self-Identified Sources of Occupational Information.* Accumulating occupational information was very much a byproduct of the participants' outside experiences. Yet many of the participants also gathered occupational information in a variety of other ways, some intentional and some less intentional. The common theme, however, is the way in which these events played a role in causing them to consider or discard a given occupation. This category encompasses the various strategies and experiences, identified by the participants, for learning about career possibilities.

At the more intentional end of the spectrum, a couple of participants described self initiated career exploration in which they researched occupational information on the internet. One young woman, a sophomore, describes this process saying, “I just like go online, you know, just type in whatever, just to see availabilities and stuff.”

Another more *unintentional* or vicarious strategy for learning about careers was via television, movies, and books. A few participants cited one of these sources of information, such as one participant who share the following perspective on careers in medicine:

I’m also kind of interested in diagnostics...So maybe be a diagnostician...one of my favorite shows on TV is *House*...just from watching that show I kind of got interested in that, cause I don’t think I thought that was an actual career, I thought you were just in internal medicine and that’s just one of the things that you do...

Regardless of the show’s level of realism, this young woman filed the information away as an occupational possibility. Another participant cited examples of psychiatry and psychology from the television show *Growing Pains* and the recent film *Freaky Friday*, ultimately adding those careers to her list of career options.

Academic and school emerged as another major source of occupational information for several participants, many of whom cited school projects, assigned books, or classes they enjoyed when discussing their current career possibilities. For example, one young woman had a particularly meaningful experience in an ethics course. She elaborated, “I like ethics a lot, I guess I had a really passionate teacher in ethics he gave me a new appreciation for...like thinking into things and...controversial subjects, I like discussing that...” Other participants mentioned similar experiences, including one young woman who talked about a specific paper she wrote in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade which inspired

her to pursue science and medicine. Through these courses and teachers, they gained some insight into intellectual and academic activities they enjoy, which can ultimately affect their chosen career options.

And finally, some of the participants discussed their observation of others as a significant source of information. A few participants cited a school-organized “career day” as a helpful mechanism for gaining some occupational information and guiding them towards a possible career path. Other participants mentioned individuals closer to home, such as one young woman who aspired to a possible career in advertising, largely the result of observing her older sister’s career. She said, “[My sister’s] graduating and she already has some job offers, like one in San Francisco and it just sounds really appealing to me, like when you do advertising you can work almost anywhere.” The process of seeing her sister’s occupational path provided some degree of occupational info that this young woman has added to her knowledge-base of career possibilities.

Overall, the sources of information in this category are diverse, but the common denominator is that each of these participants described these people or experiences as influential in their career search process. They each share a sense of agency in processing this information, and using it to inform their range of career options.

*Father Modeling.* A final and very significant element of “exposure to occupational information” that emerged from the data was “Father Modeling”. It is important to note why this category was titled *Father* modeling rather than *Parental* modeling, or even *Father and Mother* Modeling. The data simply did not include instances wherein the participants discussed emulating their mothers’ careers. While they sometimes reported a mother’s career path, it was often mentioned as a passing fact,

rather than an influential source of occupational information. Implications and hypotheses regarding the focus on fathers will be addressed in Chapter 5, Discussion.

The defining characteristic of this category is the extent to which the participants closely observed the nuances of their fathers' occupations, and subsequently considered emulating that career path by including it in their list of occupational possibilities. The quotes in this category stand apart from the previous category, because the observation of other people seemingly possesses less power than the day-to-day observation of their fathers. Furthermore, in some cases the fathers seemed to take a more intentional and active role in introducing their daughters to a particular career field. Thus, the dimensions in this category correspond to the following: 1) Intentional Father Modeling, and 2) Participant Observation of Father's Occupation.

In the first dimension, the most telling example of *intentional* father modeling comes from a young woman aspiring to a career in finance. She stated,

[My Dad is] always bring home books, introductory books, trying to break down the financial world and the stock market and things like that...he's had me started on watching my own accounts...since I was 16, I started my own mutual funds and accounts that I can kind of watch...

The father, it should be added, is in finance as well, employed at a major financial firm. He teaches and exposes his daughter to the "financial world" as well, modeling the practice of following the stock market and investments.

Other fathers were less intentional, and the data suggests that their contribution to the participants' store of occupational information occurred more vicariously. Actually, the mere exposure to the father's career was a piece of information in itself. One participant, for example, states, "I was kind of thinking business, cause my dad majored

in business and I just thought, why not?" Likewise, another young woman reports, "I've thought about being a lawyer like my dad, cause that's fun." She cited few specifics regarding this possible occupation, but apparently being exposed to her father played a role in causing her to add law to her possible career options and career knowledge-base. Mere suggestion is a powerful mode of gathering information.

And finally, some participants gained occupational information by watching their father's reactions to his occupation. One participant decided to rule out "nurse" as an occupation based on the following information: "my dad's a respiratory therapist, which I guess is sort of on the same level [as nurse], but they seem usually like overwhelmed with work and just the stuff they have to deal with it seems, well I don't know, I wouldn't want to do it..." Her vague sense that nursing would be "overwhelming" comes directly from the modeling of her father.

The extent to which the fathers engaged in intentional modeling varied with each individual participant. Yet the common experience of observing one's father and subsequently basing occupational choices off of those observations was an important and frequent event that emerged from the experience of these young women.

### *Exposure to Values*

The next two categories in "Exposure", while equally relevant to the career selection process, say less about occupational information and more about the values and lifestyle choices people make when choosing careers. These categories describe the two sources from which the participants gain information regarding occupational values: parental modeling, and observing the values and lifestyle choices of others.

*Parental Modeling.* In this category, the participants return to the absorption of parental modeling, incorporating data that refers both to the father *and* mother. The content of this data focuses on the values that the participants are able to infer by their parents' behavior and choices.

The majority of the data from this category includes descriptions of parents' current actions, or at least actions/choices that took place in the participant's lifetime. This dimension therefore includes direct modeling of values in general, as well as values that relate more specifically to career selection. One participant, for example, discussed her parents' commitment to service, explaining that her father sets aside money for charitable causes and her mother volunteers. It takes little extra effort for this young woman to deduce (from their actions) that service and charity are values held by her parents. This same young woman also observed her father's value for spending time with his family. She described his typical day: "he's gotten his business to where he can work at home, he, um, gets to eat lunch with my mom every day...he can leave at 3:00 and go do that and so that's nice...that's something that I would definitely want as far as having a family..." In addition to the observation of how parents spend their time, the parents' spending habits emerged as another form of parental modeling. One young woman differentiates her privilege from other privileged peers based on the values her parents model.

My parents' priorities have been like nice trips, um, a comfortable house, and safe cars and that has worked out great with me, I'm completely happy with...like going to Africa as opposed to having a Mercedes any day...I think that my friends parents may spend it differently, and I know my parents give a lot to charity...so I'm really grateful for that...

In addition to the parents modeling how they spend their time or money, a few participants were able to observe their parents' level of occupational enjoyment—another career-related value. One participant reported multiple parental role models from whom she can gather information about the relative importance of enjoyment.

...my step dad works a lot more than he wants to and so does my dad, my mom...changes jobs a lot, my step mom is the only one that seems to be really happy, she's pretty excited about it, but she puts a lot more, she works really, really hard...she's working late hours, but she enjoys it...

Regardless of the ultimate value this particular participant chooses to place on occupational enjoyment, she has watched her parents as they model varying levels of work, and varying levels of enjoyment.

Overall, the majority of participants relayed some form of information which sheds light on the values that may have guided their parents' career-selection process.

*Observation of Others' Values/Choices.* This category extends the theme of observation, demonstrating how participants look to not only parents but also other family members and adults in their lives as they develop their own occupational values. One participant describes how this general process of observation helped her develop her own occupational values. For her, it was, "...the experience of seeing what's been around me and looking at my friends' parents, what they do, how much time they spend with their kids, vacations, um, money even..." Thus, these examples of observational exposure are significant. The observations listed by the participants fall into two major dimensions: observation which results in wanting to emulate an occupational value, and observation that results in the development of a different value.

An example of the first dimension comes from one participant who closely observed her sister's occupational path. She relayed the following observation: "I know

she also interned at an advertising company when she was in high school and...I remember back when she was interning there...her talking about it and how fun it is...” Witnessing her sister have “fun” in her occupation is a potential value that this young woman may therefore consider more fully. Another participant talks about a boyfriend of her sister, who she described as “...so liberal and ...so open minded towards everyone.” She went on to explain that her exposure to his open-mindedness “...really opened my eyes and so...I think that if I’m thrown into an [open-minded] community like that, then I think that I will really gain a better understanding...of people and like a new appreciation and new perspective on life.” Her exposure to a different way of thinking potentially instilled the desire to recreate that in her occupational or academic life.

At the other end of the spectrum, the second dimension in this category includes participants’ observations of values they do *not* admire, and thereby potentially hope to avoid. For example, one participant used a friend’s father as an example of someone who potentially spends *too much* time at work, saying, “[my friend], her dad is a defense attorney, a district defense attorney...and he spends a lot of time at work, I’m kind of worried about like how much time your work hours would be...” Another participant relayed a similar example, citing a boyfriend’s father as the target of her observation. “while I respect people who do want to do [medicine], I’ve seen first hand, I was over at my boyfriend’s house all the time and I saw [his Dad] on call and leave right during the middle of dinner...so I kind of said, no...” For both these participants, the observation of people whose jobs necessitate time away from the family ultimately influenced the values that may guide their occupational choices.

As with parental modeling, the observation of other individual's lifestyle and career choices is a powerful source of information for solidifying one's own occupational values. While their ultimate values may differ, the participants are similar in this common process of observational learning.

*Core Categorical Group: Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria*

*"Margie"*

*We're alone in Margie's house, which is large and beautifully decorated. One look at the artwork and knick-knacks tells me her parents have traveled...quite a bit. It takes her awhile to warm up. She seems unsure of me at first, and unsure of this interview. Her voice is soft and her manner shy. But, as it turns out, Margie has a lot to say.*

*Margie is curious and bright; she speaks passionately about her classes, and about learning to think for herself. She talks about her value for open-minded discussion and philosophical debate. She wants to experience something new...something outside her world at St. Charles. She's traveled places I can't believe—Africa, Switzerland, Italy, and so on. And she is grateful for her parents, who have shown her the importance of travel, the value of service and charity, and the importance of staying humble despite their obvious wealth.*

*The interview nears the one-hour mark, and Margie has discussed her privilege, her social groups, and her interest in the Classics, which she demotes to an academic minor because it could never lead her to a real career. And then Margie begins explaining the trap she is in—the struggle she faces. She is torn between her desire to experience something different, and her desire to maintain the comfort and privilege she has known her whole life. This conflict is very real to her, and the counselor in me is screaming to explore this more fully. This interview is a culmination of so many issues—of exposure to privilege, of the expectation for achievement, of Social Class Worldview, and of experiential learning. It's a messy process, and she has reached no final career goals. And then we have to end. I wish her luck, wishing I could have said more.*

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The final and Core group of categories, "Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria", represents a culminating task in the internal process of determining career options. The categories in this group include data that demonstrates the power of direct verbal messages, in addition to the participants' ownership of the criteria that determines occupational satisfaction. More specifically, this core category

group captures 1) the participants' processing and/or internalizing of verbal feedback and messages, 2) the participants' statements of occupational criteria they will use to determine career options and 3) the internal conflict for some participants between the occupational and lifestyle values they hold.

### *Processing Verbal Feedback*

The section title, "Processing Verbal Feedback" refers to just one category, albeit a very thorough one. The following category, "Processing Career-Related Feedback" examines verbal feedback that relates specifically to the selection of a career.

*Processing Career-Related Feedback.* This category encompasses the direct verbal messages the participants reported receiving throughout their career exploration process thus far. The messages relayed in this category are distinct from the indirect and experiential messages described in the "Exposure" category grouping above. In "Exposure" the participants observe someone and use him/her as a model for developing occupational criteria. While powerful, this is one step displaced from what is occurring here, with the processing of directive verbal messages, largely originating from parents and other meaningful adult figures. These individuals comment on specific occupations and values, and sometimes convey an overall level of support for the participants' tentative occupational choices. The young women directly quote their parents or these influential figures, and subsequently engage in an active *processing* of these messages. And frequently, they use that message as a stimulus for either considering or discarding a potential occupation. These messages are often value-laden and highly stimulating, which is why they serve as such powerful messages for the young women. They are

distinct from observation because they are more intimate to the participants' internal process of career circumscription.

The dimensions of this category speak to the all-encompassing nature of the verbal messages and feedback. Many are a combination of both occupational information *and* values, making it difficult to distinguish between them based solely on content. Ultimately, it made the most sense to examine the quotes as they range according to the specificity with which they address the participants' career possibilities. The dimensions include: 1) Instilling Suggestions regarding specific occupational possibilities, and 3) Providing judgment of one of the participants' stated career options.

The first dimension of this category incorporates the most significant number of quotes—those that comment on a particular occupation that the parent or authority figure *suggests* as a potential option. One participant related an incident in which her father provided some verbal feedback on a possible career path. “I’m reading *Freakonomics*, that one [economics] book and he said, oh, I think that would be good if you turned out as an economist.” While the story she tells does not directly mention her future aspirations, economics is indeed one of the career options she listed earlier in the interview. In a similar vein, another young woman talked about having received the feedback from a priest at the school that she would make a good counselor. Her response? “I was like, hmm, that’s a good idea.” The power of suggestibility is evident in yet another participant, a young woman previously attached to an occupational goal in medicine, who stated, “I’ve been thinking about business, too, which my dad loves, he’s been going for years, ‘now you may want to think about business, too’ ...so that makes him happy that I said that.” Their conversations about business may have simply provided the participant

with occupational information. Yet the source of the message—in this instance the father—is significant as well. His verbal suggestion had power, and the participant is very much aware that her resulting consideration of the business field has made him “happy”. Other participants relayed occupational suggestions that contained inherent value-statements as well. A young woman mentioned she had recently decided to consider a career in computer science, stating, “...right now like people are really wanting technology-people. Those jobs are really open so my parents are like you know you can look into all that because that is what people are like wanting right now...and willing to pay.” Again, this particular message is a statement of occupational information, but also provides the feedback that she should consider occupations that provide a good salary and job security. The suggestion that computer science would be a practical occupational goal has been considered and digested, and is now a possibility in the mind of this young woman. In nearly every case, the occupation being suggested is one that the participants subsequently considered in their pool of possible occupations. Mere suggestion is indeed a powerful verbal message that the participants consider and to which they give credence when choosing an occupational path.

A second dimension to this category captures the verbal messages which provide direct feedback on an occupation the participant has already chosen as a potential occupational goal. One young woman, for example, expressed an interest in studying the Classics. A frequent messenger of occupational feedback for these participants, the father, reportedly “makes it a joke, like, well you can’t do anything with that.” This young woman proceeded to agree, saying, “yup...no I probably couldn’t.” She plans to minor in the Classics. While it is certainly unclear whether or not the father’s feedback

was a decisive factor, it was nonetheless feedback she cited when stating her ultimate decision to minor in a field that interests her. Other participants received even more direct feedback on one of their chosen career options. A participant considering teaching was told by her mother, “you don’t want to do that, they don’t make very much money”, and another participant was encouraged to avoid medicine by a family friend. She quoted this individual’s feedback saying, “...they said, you know...you’re the type that wants to have a family and wants to be really involved in their family’s life and...it’s too hard.” These messages are based on values and the messenger’s belief that the young women share similar values. Accurate or not, they are potentially significant sources of occupational data for the participants in this population.

The process of “internalizing and processing occupational criteria” is partly dependent on the verbal feedback that these young women receive from influential figures in their lives such as parents, teachers, and family friends. As the dimensions and quotes above suggest, there is a great deal of variability in the content of these messages. Some are global, some are specific, some are value-free, and some are saturated in value judgment. Yet the process at work here is what holds this data together in one, coherent category. The verbal messages and feedback are actively processed by these young women, and play a major role in the process of ultimately internalizing a list of occupational possibilities.

### *Self-Reported Career Criteria*

The previous section represented how the participants hear and process the feedback of their parents and other influential adults in their lives. This section moves another step closer to the participants’ ultimate selection of a career, or at least to the

development of career options. This group of categories, titled “Self-Reported Occupational Criteria”, lists and describes the various values, factors, and criteria the participants reported considering when developing their career possibilities. It should be noted that not all of these values were unanimous among the participants; some criteria were mentioned by only a few of the participants. But when taken as a composite, they reflect a thorough picture of the various criteria that the participants feel their future occupations must meet.

*Fear of Being Stuck.* Overall, there was great variability in the values and sources of occupational criteria listed by the participants. Rarely did two participants list the same group of values. Yet there was one criterion that was unanimously mentioned by the participants. The in-vivo title of this category, “Fear of Being Stuck”, represents the participants’ severe apprehension for finding themselves “stuck” in an occupation. The “fear” associated with it provided a powerful picture of how the young women define undesirable occupations. While there was consensus that “being stuck” was something to be avoided, there was some variability regarding the various meanings of the word “stuck”. Overall, two meanings emerged that correspond to the two dimensions of this category: 1) no room for advancement or changing occupations and 2) Boredom.

The first meaning (and first dimension) of “stuck” implied a lack of room for advancement in an occupation. The girls perceived themselves at risk for being “stuck” in a job where they could not “climb the ladder” or “excel”, which has already been described as one of their expectations. One participant described this sentiment by stating, “...that’s my greatest fear...being stuck in something and not being able to really change...” She therefore exhibited an awareness that some occupations leave little room

for the type of advancement or mobility she would like to have. Another participant similarly focused on finding a career that would allow her a sense of mobility, explaining her desire to find a career in, “something...that would open up opportunities for me, I guess...something that I wouldn’t be limited in...” Again, “stuck” for these two women involves finding themselves in a job where options are limited, and advancement is doubtful. The *type* of occupation that might necessitate a change or advancement leads to the alternate definition of the word “stuck”.

The other and more common meaning of “stuck” (and the second dimension of this category) seems to be synonymous with the feeling of boredom. The word “fear” appeared just as frequently alongside the word “bored” as it did alongside “stuck”. And while the participants varied to some extent in the jobs they might consider boring, there was consensus that feeling “stuck” or “bored” is most likely to occur in the context of menial, tedious, or repetitive occupations. One young woman described her vision of tedious, explaining, “I don’t want to be like stuck in doing like labor or something tedious.”

In some instances, this tedium resulted from the tasks involved in the job. One participant, for example, ruled out any careers in which repetitive tasks are involved, stating, “I cannot do the same thing for a very long period of time...um, like I worked [at a clothing store] for...like 4 months, and I just couldn’t do it because it was so repetitive, everything, I just, ugh...” A number of the participants labeled themselves as someone who “gets bored very easily” or as someone who needs a great deal of variety. As one participant described herself, “I would have to do something that’s interesting and new every single day...” Some participants offered examples of acceptably interesting

occupations, such as one young woman who said, “I want something obviously that would be a new experience each day, something like teaching would be like that, or like working in a medical office, it wouldn’t always be the same things over and over again...” Another participant, interested in criminal law, focused more on the intellectual variety offered by her chosen occupation.

I just think it would be so much more interesting and you would learn so much more by representing the criminal who, you know, it’s like a puzzle you have to figure out what they’ve done, why they did it, and then you have to turn it around and spin it to make them look like they didn’t do anything or else to let them receive a lesser punishment.

So despite the varying career aspirations, many participants expressed interest in careers that offer a variety of stimulating tasks.

In addition to tedious tasks involved in a job or career, the participants were similarly wary of occupations where the actual workplace setting seemed dull, tedious, or boring. A number of young women described a “fear of being stuck” in settings such as offices, labs, or desks in general. They expressed a preference for variety or the opportunity to be outdoors.

In general, redundant or repetitive occupations were largely unacceptable to these young women. It seems that being “stuck” is often synonymous with being bored, and there is a consensus that “boring” and/or menial jobs are unacceptable. This sentiment seems best encapsulated by one young woman. She stated, quite simply, “I don’t exactly like clocking in...”

*Salary.* It was rare that a participant directly stated that a large salary was significant or central criterion in choosing a career. However, a few participants did make it evident that salary was playing some kind of role in their career decision-making

process. For those participants who *did* mention money/salary as an important consideration, there were two different perspectives. Some participants conveyed that a “good” salary was just a given in terms of important career criteria. As one participant claimed, “of course I want to be wealthy, I mean, who doesn’t?” Another young woman began her list of career criteria by saying she wants, “good pay, obviously”. In their perception, it is “obvious” and to some extent unanimous that most people would choose a career based on its salary.

For other participants, the inclusion of salary in their list of occupational criteria emerged more as a deliberating factor in the decision to include or discard a particular occupation—most notably teaching. One participant, considering a teaching career, wondered out loud, “...if I don’t get married until I’m 35, could I support myself?” This comment highlights another element of the “salary” data. A *large* salary was not always the consideration. For some participants, the salary simply needed to be enough to feel secure. As one participant states, “I think like the income is a big consideration to take in, um, I don’t want to make too much money, but like not enough...” She never quite finishes that sentence, but she seems to imply that when it comes to salary, she simply wants “enough”.

*Enjoyment.* Somewhat related to the value the participants placed on “interest” is the value they place on “enjoyment”. The majority of the participants emphasized the importance of enjoying their career. For some, this was presented as a generic criterion. They may lack ideas about a specific occupation, but “Will I enjoy it” was a guiding question. For others, enjoyment was listed more as an avoidance of the alternative. For example, one young woman states, “I just want to do something that I don’t hate going to

work...” And still for others, this value was conveyed in the context of considering a specific occupation—an occupation they expected to love. A participant who was considering a career in theater cited enjoyment as the main reason. “I’ve loved performing ever since I was little. And it’d be so cool to be able to perform forever and ever.” While she also mentioned several other factors that could make a career in theater difficult, her complete enjoyment of the activity was indeed significant. While “enjoyment” was mentioned less than “interest level” or fear of boredom, it was nonetheless a criterion that neared unanimity.

*Balance.* “Balance” was a criterion mentioned by a very limited number of participants. This category encompasses the instances in which the participants made a reference to wanting time for themselves or for their personal life, and indicated a desire to *avoid* being someone “consumed” by their work. Some also indicated that they had avoided a specific occupation because it required too much school, or would have lengthened the time of intense work before they could begin their careers and begin having more free time. While many of the participants did mention similar criteria such as having time for family or having time to travel, there were only two participants who seemed to directly allude to the desire for balance between their future personal and professional lives.

*Time for Family.* In general, a future family was not something the participants stressed as they relayed various career decision-making factors. Yet consideration of family did appear in the interviews with some participants, and emerged as another criterion for choosing an occupation. As with many of these values and criteria, the participants varied in the specificity with which they had considered this issue. Some

participants conveyed a more global requirement that any career they choose would need to allow time for family, particularly children. Thus, one participant did not specify a particular career, but did indicate that she wants a career that would allow a flexible schedule. "...if I was working with two kids, I could either work out of my hours or manage hours where I could, play their sporting events and take them out, that type of thing..." Another participant had a less defined plan, but a more vivid image of the challenges her occupation might introduce. She stated, "...working like in a law firm, with a family, I mean...I don't ever want to be the type of person that's too busy furthering their career to experience life..." While she may not have a specific strategy identified to work around this dilemma, she is aware that she wants time for family, and that her chosen occupation may make that difficult. A final participant approached this occupational criterion from the perspective of considering a potential occupation simply because of her perception that it would enable her to spend time with her future family. "...like being a psychiatrist would be really nice job if like I needed a family and having a job at the same time. It would work out really well." Her belief in the feasibility of combining a career in psychiatry with family results in her consideration of that career path. So despite the specificity with which the participants approach the combination of job and family, there are some who are definitely factoring this issue into their career search process.

*Providing Private Education.* For some participants, the belief in the power and importance of a private education subsequently instilled a desire to send their *own* children to a private school in the future. While a few participants mentioned their belief in the value of private education, only one participant stressed the ability to send children

to private schools as a value or criterion for choosing an occupation. She mentioned this value several times, saying, “I would especially like to provide education, like [my parents] did for me...financially I want to have a career that could do that.” It may be that other participants had similar feelings; it is unclear. This young woman was the only one to mention this criterion specifically.

*Travel/Living Abroad.* Another criterion that emerged as a common decisive factor for the participants was the opportunity to either travel or live in another location. Several of the participants reported a “passion” for travel, and expressed a desire to continue traveling in their adult lives. Locations were rarely specified; more often, the participants simply mentioned a general desire to leave their home-state, such as one participant who says, “...traveling interests me a lot...I don’t want to stay in [this state].” For one participant, this desire to travel was tied directly to her career choice, which would need to afford her enough money to travel. She explains, “yeah, that’s one thing is that I want a job that’s going to give me enough money so I can travel cause that’s one of the huge, I guess passions, things that I’m passionate about it traveling.” Other participants chose to approach travel in the context of actually living abroad, as was the case with one young woman who stated, “...my goal is that I want to live out of the country for at least five years.” Thus, she will consider occupations that could provide that opportunity. And finally, one other participant conveyed a similar goal, but took it one step further, specifying an occupation that would allow her to live abroad. “I just recently started thinking about [business]...I really like to travel and so, I was thinking maybe I could do global something in business, international business, something like that...”

*Service and Charity.* A final career criterion mentioned by a few of the participants was the desire to engage in service, social issues, or charitable causes. The participants who stated this goal varied in their aspired involvement with charitable causes, yet it was important to each of them. One young woman talked about simply enjoying volunteer activities, and subsequently expressed, “I would like to volunteer in places. I feel like I don’t do that enough, I would like to do that more, um, in some spare time, I think, I’d like to do that...” Thus, her future occupation would need to leave time for possible volunteer pursuits. One other young woman used her interest in service to help make the decision of which college to attend. She describes her future university saying, “It’s a campus with a conscience kind of thing...I like the people there.” One final participant was perhaps the most passionate about her desire to engage in service or charity in the future. For her, this was a value that she believed would significantly affect her occupational choice. She explains, “...ok, here’s what I’ve been given, this family, this school...I feel like I need to use it to benefit society...so with a career I either want to have the time to be able to do some type of service, or I want to be able to fund something or something like that...” With either option she presents (direct service or monetary charity), her occupational choices will most assuredly be affected by her self-described “passion” for helping others and benefiting society.

### *Struggling with Value Conflicts*

As some participants relayed their values and occupational criteria, mixed emotions began to emerge. The following category is a specific type of value-conflict that seemed particularly present for some of the young women. It is a culmination of many of the preceding categories, and a the final category presented in this section.

*“Homeostasis”*. While many of the participants seemed extremely self-assured in the criteria listed in the categories above, there were other young women who spoke of a clash between some of their self-reported values and their career criteria. It was determined that these quotes deserved a separate category, as they tended to cut across several values, and incorporated hints of the preceding categorical groups. There were three participants who seemed to embody this particular category. And while these participants described varying nuances of this internal process, they all seemed to share a similar conflict: the desire for social class “homeostasis”. They possess some goals and aspirations for a life outside of what they know, but are hesitant to choose an occupation or lifestyle that would result in a change from their current standard of living. This data-rich category is a powerful culmination of the dynamic intersection of career and social class worldview.

The first of the three participants in this category spoke frequently of her passionate dedication to service, and to bettering the lives of others. One of her primary occupational criteria was to find a career that would allow her to benefit others through either direct service or financial charity. Yet the privilege this young woman experienced throughout her life also tempts her to focus on providing for herself. She explains, “...I’m kind of torn because in one way I’m like I just want to live my own little happy family and then another part of me is like, I want to do everything I can with all of this [privilege] so that I can change something...” Her passion is evident throughout her interview, yet wavers at times, particularly when she feels faced with a harsh reality that runs so contrary to the life she has enjoyed. This is particularly evident as she discusses

the possibility of an occupation that involves more “direct” service to others. She elaborates on the life of a social worker, for example, saying,

I’ve seen the work [social workers] do, and while I really appreciate what those people do, I...there’s a part of me that, as selfish as it may be, that’s kind of like ...I don’t want to be dealing with those people all the time...I want to be able to come home to my family and not be thinking of...like this girl, her adopted family who won’t have her back and kept all of her siblings, you know, I don’t want to be thinking of that type of thing...

In her interview she ultimately leans toward a career in which she can acquire enough financial wealth to fund philanthropic projects rather than provide direct service. Yet she never seems fully convinced of this plan; there is an internal struggle between her desire to help and her love of the materially *and* psychologically “comfortable” life she knows.

The second participant in this dimension faces a similar dilemma. She has known a very comfortable lifestyle, observed her parents’ enjoyment of that lifestyle as well, and yet also seems to long for an escape from her current world. She articulated this struggle, saying,

...there’s this huge part of me that’s like wanting to be like my mom and live here and belong to [the country club] and drive a Lexus and like, because my mom is obviously really happy, but then there’s like this other part of me who wants to, like be able to live in the mountains and have a husband and raise children and...like I could see myself in two completely different [worlds]...I don’t know, maybe I’ll find someplace in between, but...I always wanted to be able to afford a comfortable life...

She conveyed a vague sense that there might be a life other than what her working mother has had, but the temptation to live similarly based on the observation of her mother’s happiness is a very powerful draw. Her hesitancy to live this alternate life in the mountains is indicative of the larger struggle for homeostasis, which seems to stem from the fears associated with falling beneath one’s current social class. She confirms

this belief with the powerful statement, “you can’t go any lower than your status where you’re born under or else it’s kind of looked at as a kind of failure.” It is this sentiment that leads to the final participant who speaks about this struggle for class homeostasis.

This young woman, aspiring to a career in law, alluded to a clash of values as well. She described the hesitancy for peers to fall “beneath” their current class status, saying, “I think when people think of careers that might be beneath them or don’t have a certain stigma of wealth or being elite attached to them they automatically dismiss it because they view that in their minds as dropping beneath what they were or what they were raised to do.” The pull towards homeostasis, therefore, derives not just from a desire to be comfortable, but also a desire to fulfill one’s social class identity, regardless of one’s interests or passions. And this particular participant also spoke to the mechanisms leading to class homeostasis. She elaborated on this from a more personal perspective, stating,

I know the occupations that I’ve looked at have been upper class occupations...it’s not that my parents...were like, ok you can either be this or this, but there’s never been another option presented...[just] lawyer, doctor, executive...but if you find a job that makes you happy and doesn’t make you a lot of money then more power to you, your happy is really what matters, but, I just feel that when you’re raised in a certain environment that becomes all you know...

This final quote demonstrates the intersection of exposure, values, and social class, and embodies this young woman’s clashing beliefs regarding the importance of happiness, and the power of class identity.

“Model of Contextual Privilege and Career Selection in Adolescent White Women”

The descriptions of the four major Categorical Groups and their respective categories provide a thorough picture of the themes and phenomena that emerged from

the participants' descriptions of their "lived experiences" amidst the career exploration process. Yet the Categorical Groups do not exist as separate entities, or as a progressive hierarchy of discrete "steps" on the path to career selection. In addition, it is important to interpret the model with caution; it does not represent cause-effect relationships. Rather, it represents an interrelated set of phenomena, each simultaneously influencing the participants with an equal degree of power. This second half of the Results Section describes the dynamic interplay between the four Categorical Groups, captured in the team's final Grounded Theory model, depicted in Figure 4.

This section is organized in the following manner: First, the general structure of the model is explained. Following some general comments on its structure and title, the emergent relationships between the first three Categorical Groups are described. The relationships between "Social Class Worldview" and the other two Categorical Groups ("Achievement" and "Exposure") are addressed first, followed by an explanation of the relationship between "Achievement" and "Exposure". The Core Categorical Group, "Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria", will then be discussed in terms of its relationship to the other three Categorical Groups. And finally, some brief concluding remarks are provided.

It should be noted that this section describes the relationships between categories that the team determined were *grounded* in the data. Some of these relationships were directly stated by the participants, while others were implied based on the data summarized in each category. Regardless, it was the team's intention to develop an active model that best represents the lived experiences and worldview of the participants.

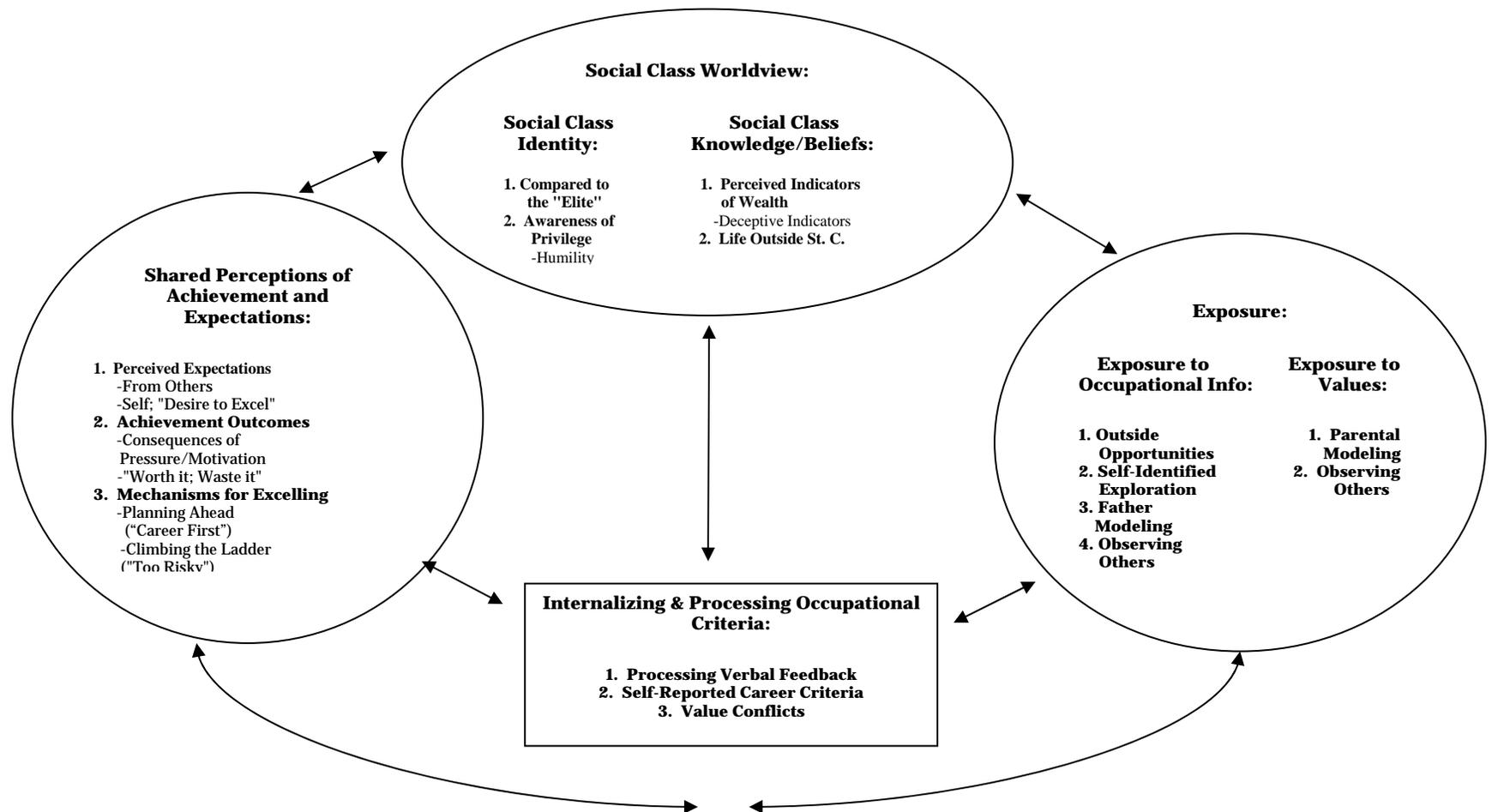
#### General Structure of the Model

The Grounded Theory Model, represented in Figure 4, is comprised of the four major Categorical Groups already described. The title of this model, “Contextual Privilege and Career Selection in Adolescent White Women” describes the population, its context, and the way in which the model describes the numerous mechanisms involved in “career selection”. The “Core Category” at the bottom of the model is represented by a square, while the other three major Categorical Groups are represented by circles. The categories and subcategories which comprise each major Categorical Group are listed inside its respective circle or square. The double-arrows connecting the four major groups are indicative of the fact that the relationships between them are reciprocal, rather than unidirectional. For example, Social Class Worldview influences Exposure, and Exposure likewise influences Social Class Worldview.

#### *Social Class Worldview Relationships*

At several points in the analysis, the team considered choosing Social Class Worldview as the “Core Category” due to its seeming power and influence over all the major categories that emerged from the data. As analysis progressed, it seemed as though Social Class and its components (identity and knowledge) permeated every phase of the participants’ career exploration process. It was ultimately decided, however, to simply represent Social Class Worldview as an initial force behind the three other Categorical Groups, which is why it rests at the top of the model. The relationship between Social Class Worldview and the “Core” Categorical Group will be addressed later as the model is synthesized. First it is necessary to focus on the relationships between Social Class Worldview and the other two Categorical Groups: 1) “Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations”, and 2) “Exposure”.

Figure 4. "Model of Contextual Privilege and Career Selection in Adolescent White Women"



### *Social Class Worldview and Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations*

The major connection between these two Categorical Groups seemingly lies in the reciprocal relationship between the participants' overall identity as privileged (but not "elite"), and their desire to continue the process of "excelling" until they have "climbed the ladder". The category, "Compared to the Elite" demonstrates that the participants possess knowledge that there is, in fact, a class of individuals above them in their perceived social class hierarchy. Subsequently, this knowledge contributes to the belief that there is room to "climb". As mentioned in the description of categories, participant data supported this connection, with at least one young woman indicating that the desire to achieve a higher social class status is "natural".

Furthermore, one's awareness of their position in a social class hierarchy influences their perception of the kind of achievement needed in order to attain a higher class status, and also maintain an existing status. The data in the "Desire to Excel" category also affirm this relationship between social class identity and achievement. The participants tended to rule out occupations that did not allow for the opportunity to "excel". Interestingly, these occupations tended to be occupations that would result in a social class status *beneath* the participant's existing social class identification.

While the participants are aware of an "elite" class above them, they are also aware of their own degree of financial privilege. This "Awareness of Privilege" within Social Class Worldview also forms a connection with the "Achievement" Categorical Group, and specifically to the category, "Worth It; Waste It". The "Worth it; Waste it" category included a participant whose awareness of her own privilege resulted in the belief that she harbors a responsibility to pursue an occupation that does not "waste" her

privilege. This connection represents another source of the relationship between Social Class Worldview and the participants' beliefs regarding Achievement.

A final source of connection between these Categorical Groups lies in the relationship between the participants' perception of "Life Outside St. Charles" and the feared consequences when there is a *lack* of expectations. The data indicate some similarity between the occupations listed in "Life Outside St. Charles" and the occupations listed when they imagined a life without the pressure or motivation to excel. Occupations such as labor or waitressing are a dreaded outcome for these young women, informed by their mental image of "Life Outside St. Charles".

#### *Social Class Worldview and Exposure*

One important facet of the relationship between these two Categorical Groups is the overlap between the occupations/values to which the participants were exposed, and their reported perception of the "Indicators of Wealth". For example, extensive education, the ability to give to charitable causes, wise spending habits, occupational prestige, and a strong work ethic were all values or occupational characteristics that were observed by the participants, as reported in "Parental Modeling" and "Father Modeling". Likewise, some of these values/characteristics were also mentioned as the participants described indicators they use when determining another individual's degree of wealth. While the participants did not overtly recognize this source of overlap, it is nonetheless important to note the connection. The values and occupations to which they are exposed are the very same qualities that inform their beliefs about who is considered wealthy. In turn, this may influence their "awareness of privilege" and overall Social Class Identity, and their association of certain occupations with certain social class groups. The world to

which they are reportedly exposed, and the world they perceive as “wealthy” are often times one and the same.

Another important link between “Exposure” and “Social Class Worldview” pertains to the participants’ level of social-class related knowledge and beliefs. In “Exposure”, the participants primarily describe exposure to high-prestige occupations and life circumstances. Their fathers, mothers, friends’ parents, and siblings almost exclusively hold white-collar, stereotypically upper-middle to upper-class occupations. Turning to “Social Class Worldview”, the participants’ exposure to a somewhat homogenous group of occupations becomes evident. As it was stated in the categorical description of “Life Outside St. Charles”, the instances in which the participants are exposed to less prestigious occupations or circumstances, frequently occur in the context of charity or service-work, and are hence confined to the lower working class or individuals living in extreme poverty. Thus, if it seems that their knowledge of “Life Outside St. Charles” provides a somewhat limited picture, it is partly their *exposure* that informs this worldview. In sum, “Exposure” affects the participants’ range of “Social Class Knowledge”, giving them limited mental images occupational possibilities outside their own social class group.

A final source of connection between “Exposure” and “Social Class Worldview” arises through the participants “Outside Experiences”. As previously described in its categorical description, the “outside experiences” named by these young women comprise an impressive list of enriching opportunities. Trips to Europe and even Africa, summer camps at Stanford; almost every participant had a story to share. Yet in general, the participants did not relay these stories without an awareness that the opportunities

were special, and that they were fortunate to have experienced such stimulating environments. They are concrete experiences that inform the participants “awareness of privilege”, another element of “Social Class Worldview”.

#### *Relationship Between Achievement and Exposure*

At first glance, “Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations” and “Exposure” seem to exist separately in the overall grounded theory model. After all, one is cognitive, while the other is largely experiential. Yet the data within each demonstrates strong linkages between the two, represented by the curved double-arrow stretching the length of the model binding these two Categorical Groups together.

One way in which “Exposure” and “Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations”, (abbreviated as “Achievement” in this section) are connected is through the participants’ “outside experiences”. While many of the outside experiences described by the young women were vacations or travel opportunities, there were also numerous examples of academically-focused summer campus, part-time jobs as congressional pages, and cross-country visits to various colleges and universities. The “exposure” to these experiences likely also exposed the participants to other privileged high school students with a similar “desire to excel”. Their exposure to these experiences and people, therefore, may continue to expose them to a narrow slice of privileged high schools students who reinforce the sense of competition the participants also perceive amongst their friends and schoolmates. In addition, exposure to these types of students may also reinforce the belief that one should “plan ahead” in order to reach the goal of “excelling”. Many of the outside experiences listed by the participants are, in one sense, “planning ahead” for the future. And conversely, the “desire to excel” and the sense that one should

“plan ahead” may be the driving force which leads the participants to pursue “outside experiences” in the first place. So in sum, interaction with to the students who may engage in these outside experiences also has the potential to reinforce the participants’ beliefs in the normality and necessity of gaining such experiences (leading them to pursue more), their beliefs about the importance of achieving and excelling, and their beliefs in the necessity of planning ahead.

“Planning Ahead” also potentially influences the participants’ own “Self-Identified Sources of Occupational Information” (a component of “Exposure”). The data in “self-identified sources” is more than just a laundry list of places the participants gathered occupational information. Many high school students engage in similar activities. What is unique about this data (as already mentioned in the categorical description) is that it indicates a degree of active motivation within the participants to not only engage in activities that could result occupational information, but also to consciously *interpret* those activities and events as occupationally relevant. Thus, the participants’ perception for the necessity of planning ahead and “excelling” may influence the extent to which they view school activities, movies, or conversations as important sources of future-relevant occupational information.

The participants’ own experiences make up just one piece of the overall “Exposure” categorical group. The other major element of “Exposure” is the *vicarious* learning that takes place, largely via the exposure to the father’s career. There are a few ways in which beliefs regarding “Achievement” seem influenced by this “Exposure”. One connection between these groups arises through the participants’ belief in, and exposure to, the concept of “climbing the ladder”. In the “Achievement” group, the data

suggests that the participants believe strongly in the notion of being able to “climb the ladder” to the top of a career field, as long as they work hard and stay motivated. Incidentally, several of the participants (as related in the categorical description) also mentioned that their fathers followed this very path, climbing to the top of their respective career field. Thus, the “exposure” to their fathers’ careers may ultimately reinforce and solidify the belief that an individual should always be able to “climb the ladder”.

Finally, another major element of “achievement” is the participants’ fear and avoidance of the types of occupations that may result if one does not maintain expectations or stay motivated. Just as the lack of “exposure” to less prestigious occupations influences the participants’ Social Class Worldview, it also influences their visual image of the occupations that result from *not* climbing the ladder. In other words, they have minimal information about occupations that rest outside the white-collar careers to which they are exposed on a daily basis via their fathers and (in some cases) their mothers. In other words, with ignorance comes fear and avoidance, and their ignorance (due to lack of exposure) colors their perception of the types of careers they fear in the “consequences of pressure and motivation” category.

#### *Core Category and its Relationships*

The Core Category, “Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria” contains the categories toward which all other Categorical Groups flow. It incorporates data that leads to some of the most important implications for career selection among these privileged young women, and is therefore the culminating piece in this description of categorical relationships and connections. The following paragraphs describe the Core

Category in terms of its relationship to all three of the other Categorical Groups: 1) Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations, 2) Exposure, and 3) Social Class Worldview.

#### *Shared Perceptions of Achievement and Expectations*

A major source of connection between these two Categorical Groups is the way in which the goals internalized and expressed by the participants in the Core Category necessitate the beliefs presented in “Achievement”. The participants work towards their goal of “excelling” through the motivation that arises from expectations, from their belief and effort in “climbing the ladder”, and their attention to the future as they engage in “planning ahead”. Furthermore, careers perceived as “too risky”, where the usual mechanisms for achievement may not operate correctly, are discarded by most participants. Thus, while there are some “risky” careers that *could* result in the occupational criteria listed in “Internalizing”, they are nevertheless ruled out because luck plays too big a role; excelling is not necessarily just a function of hard work. Therefore, participants’ self-described formula for achievement, and their avoidance of “risky” careers, places them in an advantageous position for attaining a career that allows for the occupational criteria described in the “Internalizing” Core Category.

Conversely, the values and lifestyle described in “Internalizing Occupational Criteria” reinforce the participants’ fear and avoidance of the types of careers they describe in the category, “Consequences of Pressure and Motivation”. One of these occupations, waitressing, is a powerful example of a job that could not provide the lifestyle that the participants hope to attain in the future. Thus, it is described more as an example of failure and of failing to stay motivated. This mental image of “what happens

to people who experience no pressure” is reinforced as a highly *negative* consequence because it provides a lifestyle so incompatible with their “self-reported occupational criteria”. In addition, this fear of the possible consequences that arise from a *lack* of motivation is intimately connected to the “fear of being stuck”, described in the participants’ self-identified occupational criteria. The careers included in “fear of being stuck” are those that elicit either boredom, or the feel of being trapped. In either case, the occupation is one that the participants are likely to include as another negative consequence of a life where there is no pressure, minimal expectations, and thus no motivation.

Another influential relationship between the Core Category and “Achievement” stems from the participants’ desire to pursue a career that makes their privilege and hard work “Worth it”. From the participants’ descriptions, careers that are considered “worth it” rather than a “waste” are very much compatible with the occupational criteria listed in the Core Category. It seems, therefore, that the participants’ definition of a career that is “worth it” may be partially influenced by their general career criteria. An occupation that fails to meet their occupational criteria, on the other hand, is categorized as a “waste”. Conversely, it may also be possible for the participants’ definition of a career that is “worth it” to play a role in determining their occupational criteria. Perhaps waitressing, for example, is defined as a “waste” while entrepreneurial business is defined as “worth it”. The lifestyle associated with business thus becomes a part of the participants’ internalized occupational criteria.

How else might a participant form their views of which careers are “worth it” and which are a “waste? Another factor (and category) that helps to determine the

participants' views of "worth it; waste it" is the verbal feedback they receive and process from their parents, which makes up another component of the Core Category.

Participants receive verbal feedback regarding careers in general, values in general, and also specific occupations they may be considering. Messages like "You can't do anything with that career" or "Don't be a teacher; they don't make enough money" indirectly provide information that reveals the parents' views on whether an occupation is "worth it". While participants certainly may differ according to the weight they give these verbal messages, the data suggest that the feedback is most definitely processed, considered, and likely to inform these young women's perceptions of the types of jobs, or qualities of jobs, that could be considered a "waste".

Finally, the beliefs regarding achievement, particularly "worth it; waste it" are closely related to the value conflicts expressed by a few of the participants in the "homeostasis" category in the Core Categorical Group. It has been established that the participants have multiple sources of input regarding the types of careers that could be considered a "waste". Furthermore, the "Achievement" Categorical Group also contains the equally significant description of expectations for these young women—held both by others and themselves. And lastly, the participants themselves have their own self-identified sources of occupational criteria. Each of these elements interacts to create the potential for a clash in values and expectations. One place where this is particularly evident is with "Career First". This particular category is a part of "planning ahead", but is also an expectation held by the young women that is definitely compatible with their occupational criteria. Yet for at least one participant, there is also the fantasy of having a family and living in the mountains, without much attention to the pursuit of a career that

is “worth it”. More generally, this clash between the desire to pursue a career that would maintain one’s current lifestyle (homeostasis) and the desire to try a different style of living that could be perceived as a “waste” is a significant source of conflict for some of these young women.

### *Exposure*

The participants’ experiences—both direct and vicarious—are likewise reciprocally connected to the Core Category of “Internalizing and Processing Occupational Criteria”. It is unclear whether experience (actions) or feedback (verbal) has more effect on the self-identified occupational criteria these young women report. More significant is the fact that they receive both—described in “Processing Verbal Feedback”, as well as examples of “Parental/Father Modeling” in the “Exposure” Categorical Group. The strength of parental influence on the participants’ beliefs and values stems from the way in which verbally-oriented and action-oriented messages are both presented and reinforce one another. In other words, the careers or the values that are modeled for the participants serve as a visual reinforcement of the messages that are being “processed” in “parental feedback”. And in the opposite direction, the verbal messages provided by the parents may influence the participants to be more attuned to the parents’ behaviors that confirm that spoken feedback.

In addition to the observation of parents, the participants also gather experiences of their own which serve to reinforce their list of “internalized” occupational criteria. For example, many of the young women who described such an impressive array of travel experiences also listed “travel” as an important criterion for their future careers. It makes

sense that such stimulating experiences and opportunities would ultimately result in a desire to continue traveling and seeing new places well into adulthood.

The power of parental modeling and outside experiences is also evident in the participants' descriptions of occupational criteria, as well as the value conflicts (maintaining lifestyle homeostasis) that may arise from these criteria. For these young women, exposure to their parents' lifestyle (and benefiting from that lifestyle) is a powerful means of reinforcing their own self-identified occupational criteria. And for the few participants who described an internal value struggle, the observation of their parents' lifestyle was a primary piece of data they drew upon when expressing the desire to maintain their current standard of living. Without a positive and vivid example of alternative career paths or different occupational values, the participants experience internal conflict when they possess an interest in a different lifestyle, or in a career that would result in a lifestyle different from what they have been exposed to for the first 18 or so years of their life. Conflicts arise from lacking exposure to alternative ways of being happy.

Experience is indeed a powerful mode of learning. In general, the data related in "exposure" demonstrates the participants' lack of experience witnessing people who have taken a different path than what is expected. This is confirmed by the significant overlap between their self-reported occupational criteria, and the various occupations and values to which they have been exposed.

#### *Relationship to Social Class Worldview*

The relationship between the Core Category and Social Class Worldview, the final of the three other Categorical Groups, speaks volumes about the nature of one's

social class background on the process of career selection. An important starting point for analyzing this relationship is with the participants' self-reported occupational criteria. As with the other two major categories, there is overlap between the career qualities/values listed by the participants and other important categories. In this case, the overlap exists between 1) the self-reported occupational criteria, and 2) the participants' perceived indicators of wealth. For example, criteria such as the ability to give charity, the ability to travel or take expensive vacations, and the ability to provide private education were each mentioned as *both* indicators of wealth (Social Class Worldview) and aspired qualities of a future career (Internalizing Career Criteria). The data therefore suggests that the participants' worldview is one that incorporates an aspiration for at least some lifestyle or career characteristics that also indicate a privileged social class status. Further affirming these aspirations is the verbal feedback that originates primarily from the participants' parents. While the participants may receive general feedback encouraging them to find job satisfaction, they also process more specific feedback that urges them towards careers that make the "perceived indicators of wealth" a reality for these young women.

While the participants may or may not be aware of the source of overlap described above, they *do* indicate an awareness of at least some elements of privilege in their life. This awareness of privilege has a similarly important effect on the participants' internalization of career criteria. As it has already been described, the participants' awareness that they have attended a prestigious school and had opportunities from which others are deprived makes it important (in their view) to select and pursue an occupation that makes all that privilege "worth it". Some of the values and occupational criteria

listed in “Internalizing” are qualities that seem to help the participants believe that the career is, in fact, an appropriate utilization of their privilege. For example, adopting career criteria resulting in an occupation with a high salary, the ability to give to charity, and a high level of interest and enjoyment enables the young women to believe that their future career has made full use of the privilege they perceive. On the extreme end of this connection, a “value conflict” can arise from the awareness of privilege. When the participants’ awareness of privilege meets their desire for homeostasis, an internal struggle emerges where the participants feel trapped when some of their self-reported occupational criteria fail to adequately utilize the privilege they are aware of experiencing. “Jane” for example, felt a strong need to help people in her chosen occupation as a result of the near guilt-ridden awareness of her extreme privilege. And yet she maintained a desire for homeostasis—for continuing to live the lifestyle of her parents and of her childhood. The result was a powerful value conflict that arose from the clash between awareness of privilege and her self-reported occupational criteria.

Awareness of privilege is one element of Social Class Worldview that may push these young women into the internalization of social-class-consistent occupational criteria. Further validating that process is the participants’ perception of “Life Outside St. Charles”, another significant component of their overall Social Class Worldview. The connection between “Life Outside St. Charles” and “Internalizing” career criteria is yet another reciprocal relationship. The participants’ perception of the world outside their privileged front doors as one fraught with poverty, minimum-wage, and a lack of motivation to “excel” has major implications for their occupational selection. This mental picture may lead them to select a set of occupational criteria that steers them away

from this uncomfortable image. In other words, one way of avoiding “life outside St. Charles” is to select the right career—one that embodies all the criteria they have internalized as important.

A final and highly salient aspect to the participants’ Social Class Worldview is the perception that they are far less privileged when “compared to the elite”. While some participants still identified as upper class, all were adamant in their clarification that they are not all that wealthy, “compared to some”. This piece of social class identification is important, because it may lead these young women to assume that the occupational criteria to which they aspire, if similar to their current status, is not unreasonable, not uncommon, and not “elite”. Criteria such as taking vacations abroad, donating significant amounts of money to charity, and funding private education is, in their worldview, potentially within the reach of the middle class. The occupational implications of this worldview are important to consider. The set of occupational criteria they’ve chosen is, in their worldview, normal. It is not limiting, and does not preclude them from choosing from a wide range of careers. After all, they are not aspiring to own a jet. In their worldview and lived experience, the options are broad.

*Concluding Remarks Regarding the “Model of Contextual Privilege and Career*

*Selection in Adolescent White Women”*

In reading and reflecting upon the model presented above, it may seem as though many of the categories overlap, and often data seems it could belong in more than one place. This is natural and appropriate; the data gathered from these young women shows that developing career options and making decisions is a personal, individual, value-laden process that is far from straightforward. The process of emergent categories and theory

reflects that reality. It is important to note that there are many relationships and many categories that could have emerged from the data and experiences of these ten young women. The categories and model presented above is one interpretation of the data, constructed with the goal of reaching an accurate representation of the participants' lives and worldviews. This model is not comprehensive, but does allow room for future data collection and more relationships to develop that are yet to emerge from the participants' worlds.

Yet despite some of its innate ambiguity, the model does provide important information about the intersection of social class privilege and career circumscription. The relationships between the four major Categorical Groups form an intricate picture of the participants' lived experiences that are grounded in the data, and have numerous implications for the study of social class and career development. The multiple and reciprocal connections described above demonstrate how the four Categorical Groups do not exist separately, but rather interact and reinforce one another. Together, these four Categorical Groups represent cognitive, emotional, experiential, and observational facets of a complex career decision-making process.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This qualitative study examined the relationship between Social Class Worldview and perceived career options in a sample of ten young women from privileged backgrounds. The results incorporate an array of cognitive, emotional, experiential and sociocultural mechanisms that provide a constructivist interpretation of the lived experiences of these young women. This Chapter discusses the results of that analysis, and is organized into 5 sections: 1) Results in Relation to the Original Research Questions and Existing Literature, 2) Suggested Directions for Future Research, 3) Implications for Practice, 4) Limitations, and 5) Concluding Remarks.

#### Results in Relation to the Research Questions and Existing Literature

While specific hypotheses are not consistent with the nature of qualitative research, there were some general research questions which guided this study (see Chapter 2). The specific research questions will be addressed via discussion of three major topical areas where the results overlap with existing literature. Additionally, the discussion in all three of these sections will respond to the primary aim of the inquiry, which is to examine the perceived career options of privileged adolescent girls. The three sections are: 1) Class Identity and Perceived Career Options, 2) Achievement Beliefs and Perceived Career Options, and 3) Exposure, Social Cognitive Theory, and Perceived Career Options. The relationships and application to existing research and theoretical models will be infused throughout the discussion of these major topical areas.

#### *Class Identity and Perceived Career Options*

Among the original research questions for this study were the following: How much emphasis will these privileged young women report placing on their social class when forming their beliefs about potential careers? And what exactly do they perceive as acceptable or unacceptable career options? The answers to these questions, at least for the sample in this study, emerged throughout the construction of categories and Categorical Groups. This section will discuss the data that emerged, as well as the overlap with previous research and existing theoretical models.

*Social Class Identity Development.* Chapter 2 reviewed the literature supporting that adolescents do have a relatively accurate perception of their parents (and thus their own) social class status (Lien, Friedstad, & Klep, 2001; Tudor, 1971; West, Sweeting, & Speed, 2001). While the accuracy of understanding one's social class is certainly relevant to occupational selection, the results of this current study focus more on the young women's subjective, but equally important, Social Class Worldview and social class identity. Researchers have established that individuals gain a "social self" through their development (Ruble, Alvarez, Bachman, Cameron, Fuligni, Coll, & Ree, 2004), which includes their "social class identity". The results of this study likewise found that the young women had developed a strong sense of their place in their perceived social class hierarchy. They were able to point towards other groups that had comparatively more or less, and they named multiple factors (possessions, parents' occupation, educational opportunities) that helped them decide where they belonged in the social class spectrum.

The sociological literature reviewed in Chapter 2 also touches upon additional concepts related to social class identity where individuals from upper class backgrounds

are aware of a strong discomfort or sense of isolation when they flirt with an occupational possibility seen as stereotypically “beneath” them. This aspect of identity was termed “marginalized privilege” (Maher, 1999) by one author, which describes an individual’s sense that they because they are privileged, they may not deserve the accomplishments they have achieved. Another study related the story of a young woman who aspired to be a hairdresser, and was virtually shamed into excluding this occupation from her list of possibilities (Guymer, 1999). These emotions may derive from constructs such as “collective identity” (Ogbu, 2004), and the overall belief that lower social classes are not only different, but inferior as well (Giroux, 1983). These particular elements of identity, however, did not seem prevalent among the young women in this sample. While some participants did express some discomfort with maintaining class homeostasis (discussed below), they did not relay any sense of “marginalization” as a result of their class background. In fact, as it will be discussed in the next section (Achievement and Perceived Career Options), these young women still very much identified with the notion of meritocracy, as opposed to unearned privilege and social capital. This may be due to the fact that the majority of the young women did not label themselves as “upper class”, thus eliminating the possibility that “habitus” plays a significant role in their achievement. In general, the young women in this study did not consciously perceive significantly limited career options, and their class identity may play a role in that view.

*Circumscription and Compromise.* In addition to simply developing a social class identity and self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981), literature shows that adolescents also begin to develop an occupational self-concept that interacts with their existing social self (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986). This selection of a vocational identity is

considered an appropriate entrée into adulthood (Erikson, 1968), and the results of this study certainly included young women with an established vocational identity.

Gottfredson's (1981) theory of Circumscription and Compromise (described in Chapter 2) draws upon this simultaneous development of an occupational and social self-concept in adolescents. Her theory claims that occupations which are determined "unrealistic" according to the individual's self-concept (circumscription) will be exchanged for more realistic options (compromise). As it pertains to social class, the process goes something like this: via circumscription, adolescents up to 13 years of age determine whether or not the status or prestige-level of a given occupation seems realistic or fits their aspired social class status. Careers which do not correspond with their aspired social class identity may be discarded in favor of careers more appropriate in occupational prestige (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002). Furthermore, as adolescents mature, they gain a more nuanced understanding of the demands of the world of work, ultimately "compromising" by paying less attention to prestige and more attention to internal factors such as skill or interest level (Helwig, 2004). Studies have supported this process, although focusing on adolescents from lower social class backgrounds. A longitudinal study by Helwig (2004) found that adolescents age 12 to 14 chose occupations higher in social value, and after age 14 began to aspire to occupations that more accurately fit their skill-sets, ultimately choosing lower-status occupations.

How does the current study's findings reflect Gottfredson's model of Circumscription and Compromise? Consistent with her model and Helwig's (2004) study, the young women in this study (all over age 14) did consider both occupational status and their skills and interests. However, the overall process of taking into account

the social status or prestige-level of an occupation was slightly different from the process described in Gottfredson's model. According to these results, acceptable and unacceptable careers were rarely defined in terms of their prestige level. Instead, the participants' circumscription process was better represented through the "Worth it; Waste it" category. In their worldview, careers considered "worth it" are partly defined by their ability to fulfill values such as time for travel, a flexible, family-friendly schedule, and excess money for charity. Careers that make this possible are likely to be careers high in prestige as well. Furthermore, careers that might be seen as a "waste" are those that either fail to satisfy those values, or that fail to utilize the participants' demanding education. By default, the careers that fall under the heading of "a waste" are occupations typically seen as working class. Additionally, working class careers are also the very same occupations that the girls associate with being "stuck". With these careers, it is not the lack of prestige to which the participants referred, but rather to the tedious nature of these jobs with the perceived lack of room for advancement. Again, their worldview does not incorporate a cognitive process where low prestige jobs are automatically equated with being "stuck". Yet their definition of "stuck" does, once again, curiously include occupations associated with a middle-to-low social class background.

Thus, in the minds of these participants, it is not the prestige or lack of prestige that *directly* causes them to label jobs as "worth it" or "a waste". But if it is a "waste" to pursue an occupation that does not use their education or fulfill their lofty values, they have circumscribed their list of occupations to those that "fit" their privileged class

identity. Their perception is not of “limited career options”, but their belief systems, values, and class identity indirectly create those restrictions.

*Social Cognitive Career Theory.* Another theoretical model that attempts to explain the role of contextual/demographic factors in career development is Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory, also described in Chapter 2’s theoretical framework. It is important in this discussion of class identity to note the theory’s definition of “contextual determinants”, which include an individual’s perception and appraisal of demographic characteristics such as social class background (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; 2000). According to this construct, the supports and barriers an individual may experience due to social class (or other demographic “person-inputs”) are also subject to the interpretation of the individual. That interpretation may guide them to pursue or avoid an occupational path. Indeed, research has shown that the perception of occupational barriers may contribute to career indecision (Constantine, Wallace, and Kindaichi, 2005), and may ultimately hinder individuals from acquiring self-efficacy (Luzzo & McWhirter, 2001) or from pursuing some career paths (Leal-Muniz & Constantine, 2005).

The results in this particular study also lend support to the notion that an individual’s *interpretation* of their class is an important determinant in their overall career path. This is particularly evident in the “Awareness of Privilege” category, which demonstrates that the participants in this study identify with a privileged background, perhaps enhancing their belief that they experience few, if any, “limits” to their occupational choice. Likewise, their vivid (if limited) mental image of “Life Outside St.

Charles” may reinforce their identification with a privileged class, and the view that “limits” are not a barrier in their lives.

*Struggling with Homeostasis.* The preceding paragraphs use social class identity to demonstrate how the participants in this study did not, for the most part, believe their career options were limited in any significant way. Yet one category emerged that seemed to hint at the existence of a psychological conflict at the very least. This category, entitled “Homeostasis”, introduces the notion that one possible “limitation” for these young women might arise when their internal career interests and goals do not provide the income or prestige level needed to produce social class homeostasis. This particular construct appears in the definition of “Social Class Worldview” conceptualized by Liu and his colleagues (2004). Specifically, Liu et al., identify one element of Social Class Worldview as the local environment which encourages an individual to maintain his/her current social class (homeostasis). Some literature supports this notion, such as the study related in Chapter 2 which discusses individuals’ motivations for attending business and law school. In that study, some participants explained their motivation as a result of not wanting to take a “step down” in prestige-level, and thus social class status (Schleef, 2000).

In the current study, numerous categories that resulted from the analysis may be conceptualized as “the local environment which encourages homeostasis”. Further building upon Liu’s (2004) theory, the current study adds a dimension to this view of homeostasis. Namely, a few of the young women in this study experienced some psychological discomfort as a result of their desire to maintain homeostasis, as with the participants described in Schleef’s study (2000) above. Of course this process was not

common to all the participants, but it may be one limitation that results from a life of privilege and the perception of endless possibilities.

Overall, the existing literature, existing theoretical models, and the results of this qualitative study demonstrate that an adolescents' class identity is an important indicator of the careers they see as possibilities. The young women in this study identify with privilege, which may help shape their perception that there are few limits to their career options. Yet simultaneously, the participants also engage in a form of career circumscription (worth it; waste it) which ultimately results in eliminating some occupational options that might allow them to utilize a developing set of interests and skills. The struggle for homeostasis is one potential result of these conflicting realities. The findings, however, also demonstrate that this paradoxical process is not necessarily conscious. The participants' Social Class Worldview does not incorporate the view that their list of circumscribed career possibilities is a function of being "limited" due to class identity. The occupations to which they aspire are indeed high in prestige-level, but the cognitive route to these perceived options is circuitous, and is more complex than simply believing a privileged background dictates a privileged occupational future.

#### *Achievement Beliefs and Perceived Career Options*

Another research question posed at the outset of this study was whether or not the participants would report any barriers, pressures, or difficulties in forming career goals that are directly related to their economically privileged background. This has partly been addressed above, as it pertains to the participants' identification with privilege, and thus their perception of fewer boundaries and limitations. This section approaches the

existence (or lack of) boundaries or limitations on perceived career options through the participants' beliefs regarding achievement.

*Planning Ahead.* One element of “Achievement” to appear both in the literature and the findings of this study is the emphasis on “Planning Ahead”. Chapter 2 describes this construct via Nurmi’s (1991) theory of “Future Orientation”, which posits that “Planning” is affected by demographic and situational factors such as social class background. Specifically, these factors may affect the length of time adolescents believe it takes in order to successfully plan for one’s chosen career. This has been demonstrated in the empirical literature as well, with some evidence that upper class adolescents tend to form goals that take them farther into the future (Nurmi, 1991; O’Rand & Ellis, 1974).

The results of this study lend support to the notion that adolescents from privileged backgrounds may be more inclined to look towards the future and begin planning for career at a younger age. The participants were able to describe specific career paths, as well as the colleges they were considering. Many had already traveled on “college visits” as early as their sophomore year of high school, and most had by their junior year—a norm for this population (Paul, 1995). However, while the literature seems to confirm the effect of privilege on planning, it offers less explanation for the underlying cause. What is at the root of the participants’ ability to choose early and begin planning? While there are multiple possibilities, the tendency to “plan ahead” for the young women in this sample may have a practical utility. Quite simply, they would *have* to plan ahead for the careers they are considering, at least if they do plan to take the “traditional” academic route of college and immediate post-graduate work. Competitive career paths like medicine, for example, take forethought. If this is, indeed, part of the

cause behind the overall tendency to “plan ahead”, there is also an important implication for the examination of perceived career options. “Planning ahead” in order to gain a head-start on one’s career path (such as medicine, business, or law) results in an early determination of one’s career path, leaving little room for the possibility of further occupational exploration, and further perceived options.

*Meritocracy.* Another major belief system regarding achievement that emerged from the results was the idea of meritocracy, which offers one possible explanation for why these young women *report* limited career options, yet do not *perceive* negative pressure or limitations. They believe they can “excel” in at least one of the prestigious career options they have identified. This confidence seems to stem at least partly from the comforting, yet often faulty belief system defined by sociologists as the “Myth of Meritocracy”, or the “American Dream”. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this refers to the belief that everyone in our country who works hard enough may transcend their current social class status and ultimately reach the top of the social class hierarchy (Holtzman, 2000). Again this hopeful notion has been supported by countless movies, television shows, songs, and even real-life “success stories”.

This mentality does not operate solely for people striving to move *up* in the social class spectrum, however. The young women in this study, already near the top of the social hierarchy, also maintain a strong belief in not only the existence of that meritocracy, but in its value as well, represented in the category “Climbing the Ladder”. If these young women were from another social class where hard work did *not* always pay off, they might view this differently. But they all live in situations where a parent, usually the father, works very hard in his career, and has been rewarded through financial

success and occupational prestige. Thus, for these young women, meritocracy is not a “myth” at all. From their frame of reference, it is an expected by-product of the self-described commitment to succeed. And while some of them believed that their prestigious education gives them an advantage, they still primarily identified with meritocracy, rather than social capital. The application to perceived career options is clear: as long as these young women work hard, “limits” to their occupational options do not exist. Why would anyone aspire *down* in the class system? They primarily aspire to occupations high in prestige, and also believe in the power of a meritocratic system to help them achieve those goals. The result is the perception of limitless possibilities.

*Risky Occupations: Where Meritocracy Breaks Down.* What happens when one of these young women aspires to an occupation where the notion of meritocracy is less likely to remain in tact? Many of the women expressed interest in “risky” and exclusively artistic careers in addition to their array of white-collar possibilities. How do they handle career options that challenge the concept of meritocracy, and which threaten their current social class status? The answer to this question is well represented in a recent television commercial for a luxury Sport Utility Vehicle, released in 2004. In the commercial, two seemingly privileged college-aged men are shown backpacking in a remote, ambiguously European locale. As most college students do, these two young men are discussing their future. One joyfully tells the other that he’s finally decided on a college major—ceramics! The other young man is supportive, and they go on to discuss the inherent freedom and joy that comes from choosing one’s “life calling”. Shortly after the young man describes himself living in a yurt producing ceramic plates in just 10-year’s time, the two of them are rescued from their walking by an extremely well-

groomed European couple in a brand new SUV. The two idealistic young men climb into the backseat, ogling the wood-paneling and leather interior, and an operatic voice in the background tells the viewer that this is a special moment. The second young man turns to his pottery-loving friend and says, “You can always *minor* in ceramics.” “Yeah,” he replies, confirming that life in a luxury car is much more attractive than life in a yurt.

This commercial contains echoes of Gottfredson’s theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981; 2002), which discusses the extent to which adolescents, as part of the career development process, begin to relinquish their fantasy occupations (Helwig, 2001). One study showed that throughout adolescence, boys’ aspirations for “fantasy” occupations such as professional athlete at first increased and then began to decrease in frequency. Girls, overall, reported fewer “fantasy” occupations like actress or singer (Helwig, 2001). The literature offers little explanation for the cause of the shift in preference for fantasy occupations, but does suggest that adolescents begin to gain a better understanding of the world of work and of realistic options (Gottfredson, 1981; 2002).

Similar to what the literature (and the commercial) suggests, the risky occupations mentioned in this study are the occupations for which the participants expressed an almost hidden love. But the results of this study demonstrate one possible rationale for why fantasy occupations are discarded in this privileged population. Ultimately, the participants perceive that these occupations require more than merely hard work to succeed. The results demonstrate the young women’s reasoning: they hesitate to pursue these occupations because success is dependent on more than just hard work and scholastic aptitude. Despite their hard work, they are unsure they could “excel” to a high

enough level in these careers. Thus, they avoid these occupations altogether because they are aware that luck plays a role, and because they are a possible exception to the rules of meritocracy. The “stable” occupations they list as options only require a good education at a prestigious school (which they have), and a strong work ethic (which they also have). By avoiding the risky occupations, their belief in meritocracy and the path to occupational prestige remain secure.

The examination of achievement beliefs in this study provide some meaningful explanations for why these young women seem to perceive few limits or boundaries to their occupational possibilities. Options are not limited because they believe in a system which enables them to succeed as long as they maintain their strong work ethic and “plan ahead”. While this is *their* reality and experience, it is also important to note that an outside perception might be that they *do* limit themselves by avoiding any occupation that could counter their cherished view of meritocracy.

#### *Exposure, Social Cognitive Theory, and Perceived Career Options*

The final research question guiding this investigation looked to identify the primary sources from which the participants gained their beliefs about socially acceptable and socially unacceptable career options. The interviews resulted in a wealth of data demonstrating multiple sources of occupational information. This data leads to another significant area of overlap between this study’s findings and the existing body of career development literature. Namely, both demonstrate various elements and principles of Social Cognitive Theory, and the impact of its components on the perceived career options of privileged adolescent young women. Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986) provides a useful theoretical framework for examining how the privilege

experienced by the participants in this study may affect their perceived career options. This theory, as well as the more specific Social Cognitive Career Theory (reviewed in Chapter 2), have provided the impetus for a wealth of career development literature. While both theories contain several processes and constructs relevant to the study of career, the most salient in examining the results of this study are: vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and mastery experiences.

*Vicarious Learning.* A hallmark of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is its emphasis on the process of learning through models (Thomas, 2005). Lent, Brown, and Hackett's model (1994) also acknowledges the importance of role modeling in the process of career development, stating that the values which drive various career aspirations often come from vicarious learning experiences such as observing parents, teachers, peers, or other significant individuals. Contextual variables (such as social class background) are a relevant component of vicarious learning because according to Bandura, the extent to which a role model is seen as "similar" is an important predictor of whether or not an individual will imitate another's behavior (Thomas, 2005). In his *Principles of Behavior Modification* (1969), Bandura stresses the importance of examining factors like the socioeconomic status of the "role model", acknowledging the power of such demographic factors to influence the degree to which individuals learn and imitate their behavior. Literature regarding the matching of role model-to-observer characteristics reveals mixed results, however. Some researchers have examined and failed to find significant differences in role modeling or mentoring effectiveness based on gender (Flores & Obasi, 2005), and other studies have demonstrated that role modeling is most effective when the gender of the role model and observer matches (Scandura &

Williams, 2001). Thus, mixed results can be gathered from the empirical data regarding the effectiveness of role modeling when there is “matching” of social class background.

The results from this study corroborate the existing empirical literature which shows that vicarious learning is a powerful means of gaining occupational information. The “Exposure” grouping of categories includes numerous examples of how the young women in this study witness socioeconomically similar authority figures (usually the fathers) achieving success in high-prestige careers. Furthermore, the participants vicariously gather information about occupational and lifestyle values, again from socioeconomically similar adult figures. They filter this vicarious information which serves as an example of how successfully the given occupation might fulfill values like charity and traveling.

The participants reported significantly fewer instances where they vicariously learned about an occupation *lower* in prestige, with the exception of witnessing their mothers’ careers in homemaking. Thus, the exposure and vicarious learning via their parents and friends’ parents is thus likely to paint a limited picture of occupational possibilities for these young women. But what about the potential for gathering occupational information from *other* role models via the media? Unfortunately, positive examples of the working class are all but absent from television and movies (Holtzman, 2000). One content analysis of current television shows found that only 4% of female television characters and 0% of female film characters are depicted in a blue-collar occupation (Signorelli, 1997). And of the currently aired shows depicting the working class, negative stereotypes are often reinforced (Holtzman, 2000). The views expressed by the participants of this study in “Life Outside St. Charles” seem to support these negative

(and limited) views, demonstrating that the majority of vicarious learning experiences may exist for a relatively limited (and predominantly upper class) range of occupations.

*Parental Influence and Verbal Persuasion.* In addition to vicarious learning, another component of both Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1982; 1986; 1997) and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994) is the inclusion of verbal persuasion as an important force in developing career aspirations. In general, the importance of parental involvement in the career development process has been demonstrated empirically (McNeal, 1999). In one study, adolescents mentioned parents as figures who were important to their occupational development (Helwig, 2004), and one other study found that adolescents frequently turn to their mothers for occupational guidance (Otto, 2000). Specifically, 81% of the participants in this particular study reported talking most seriously about their occupational path with mother (Otto, 2000). These empirical findings are curious in light of the results of this current study, as the literature seems both consistent and inconsistent. In one sense, the power of parental influence is very much apparent in the current study, with the "Processing Verbal Feedback" category serving as an example of how verbal messages carry persuasive power for these young women. Yet the emphasis on mother feedback in Otto's (2000) study is unclear in terms of its consistency with the current study. If anything, it seems that fathers have a more lasting effect on these young women, as evidence by the near-unanimity with which the participants reference their fathers in the "Exposure to Occupational Information" category. Yet it remains unclear from the findings whether the father's influence is also more prominent in the context of verbal persuasion. It is certainly possible that these young women might emulate their fathers' careers, but still

turn to their mothers for direct occupational advice. This possible discrepancy points to the overall question of role models and gender, which will be addressed further in “Directions for Future Research”.

Returning to the overall influence of parents, it seems that they do, indeed, have the power to influence career development via their verbal messages. But what is the result when they either approve or disapprove of an adolescent’s chosen path? The presence or lack of parental support can have a significant impact on career, as demonstrated in two studies of career in Mexican-American women. One study showed that perceived parental support was positively associated with vocational exploration and commitment (Leal-Muniz & Constantine, 2005), and another study with both Mexican American and African American participants showed that parental encouragement and expressed support of an occupation was a positive source of affirmation and influence on the ultimate selection of that career (Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999). Parents may convey their support through a range of mechanisms, but these studies demonstrate that verbal messages are one mode of disseminating influential feedback.

As research demonstrates that parental support is an important predictor of occupational goals and commitment, some studies have proceeded to describe the effects of that influence. Otto (2000) found that the values, aspirations, and plans of adolescents are likely to be compatible with the values, aspirations and plans their parents hold for them. In fact, 81% of the participants in this study reported that they usually had the same ideas as their parents regarding “what they should do with their life” (Otto, 2000, p. 113). Furthermore, 46% reported that their ideas for a future career were also similar to the views of their parents. And finally, this study demonstrated that adolescents are

aware of expectations their parents have for them (Otto, 2000), which may also be conveyed via verbal messages.

The similarity between adolescent and parent aspirations shown in Otto's (2000) study is also apparent in the results of this current study, once again through an examination of "Processing Verbal Feedback". In this category, participants actively internalized the feedback provided by authority figures, and most notably their parents. For many participants, there was a striking similarity between the occupations suggested by their parents, and their self-reported occupational goals. Furthermore, as with the empirical literature, the young women in this study were also intensely aware of others expectations, which is readily apparent in the entire category ("Expectations of Others") dedicated to these expectations, often relayed through the parents' verbal feedback.

While no research was found that examined the influence of social class on the content of these verbal messages, it seems likely that social class background would affect the types of verbal messages adolescents receive. If adolescents hear verbal persuasion only for "class-appropriate" occupations, their self-efficacy and likelihood of pursuing a broader array of occupations once again suffers, ultimately resulting in a narrower list of career possibilities. This certainly seems to occur in the current study, as the persuasive messages from parents frequently focus on the desire for daughters to pursue occupations such as business, law, medicine, and computer science, to name a few.

*Prior Experiences.* A final Social Cognitive construct and influence on occupational development (Bandura, 1986; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) is the nature of prior experience or "mastery experiences". Prior experiences with success or failure

greatly affect one's sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), a notion which is easily applied to the relationship between of career self-efficacy and ultimate occupational selection (Brown & Lent, 2006; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Research has supported this relationship as well, specifically with adolescent populations. Some studies, for example, showed that educational attainment prior to high school was predictive of young people's occupational aspirations, as well as to achievement in that chosen occupational path (Arbona, 2005; Rojewski, 2005). Presumably, those early successes or failures affected the adolescents' self-efficacy, ultimately influencing their career pursuits. Research interventions have also utilized this relationship between mastery experiences and self-efficacy, incorporating participant completion of various tasks in order to increase subjects' self-efficacy (Betz & Schifano, 2000). Furthermore, an individual's social class background may influence the number and types of activities, or the "nature and quality of educational opportunities" (Betz, 2004, p. 342) that could have implications for career choice.

The literature on "mastery experiences" related above helps to explain why the young women in this particular study might feel more inclined to pursue occupations typically categorized as "prestigious" or at least white-collar. They are groomed for these occupations through the jobs, school projects, and internships they have had the privilege to experience (see "Exposure" Category). They take numerous Advanced Placement classes in chemistry, history, physics, and math. They travel to foreign countries and learn to speak the language. They attend camps and acquire internships that allow them to practice their chosen occupational paths. In short, they have had multiple opportunities to gain "mastery experiences" for tasks involved in prestigious careers like

law, business, and medicine. And therefore, these are the occupations for which they may feel the most efficacious. Conversely, the possible stimulation provided by non liberal-arts fields is something to which these young women can apply fewer mastery experiences. In other words, they gain little experience with “Realistic” or “Conventional” (Holland, 1997) career endeavors. Thus, they may feel less efficacious and have overall less interest in these occupations they perceive as “boring” or “repetitive”, an attitude which is supported through their intense “fear of boredom” and “fear of being stuck”.

In sum, the findings of this study compliment some of the major tenets of both Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) as well as Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Specifically, Social Cognitive Theory and the empirical literature provide a rich explanation for categories such as “Exposure”, “Processing Verbal Feedback”, and “Parental Modeling” that emerged from this qualitative study. This study builds upon the existing literature by examining the relationships between Social Cognitive constructs and occupational goals within the context of a very specific (privileged) social class background.

#### Directions for Future Research

It is partly the nature of Grounded Theory for the analysis to result in new research questions and directions for further inquiry. This study was no exception. With each team meeting, each memo, and each coding session came new questions that could provide more information on the career selection process of these young women. Some of these topics areas became more saturated as coding and analysis proceeded, while others remained “loose ends” and were thus omitted from the final list of categories.

Because this study did not use theoretical sampling in its strictest sense, further data was not collected to address these loose ends. Future data collections and research—both qualitative and quantitative—would do well to examine the phenomena presented below.

### *Parenting Style*

One category that was initially created but never saturated was “Parenting Style”. The final categories involving parents that did reach saturation dealt more with the content of parental messages and modeling. The team analysis did, however, feel that the overall style of parenting was qualitatively different between some participants, and may have had an impact on career development and exploration. For example, the parents of some participants exhibited more openness with the young women regarding their decisions, their social class status, their money management, and their occupational path. It seems logical that young women whose parents communicate with them about social class would have a different Social Class Worldview than those young women whose parents tried to keep money and class issues hidden from their daughters. In a similar vein, some participants seemed to have a greater understanding and awareness of the factors their parents considered when choosing or pursuing certain career paths. This information regarding the personal process of choosing a career is distinct from simply offering feedback regarding their daughters’ decisions. Overall, it seems that the degree to which parents are transparent in their communication and parenting style may reinforce certain values or introduce ways of thinking that could be highly influential in the participants’ career development. Further data collection and interviews regarding parenting style and the nature of parental relationships seems important to pursue.

### *Father Influence, Mother Influence, and “Career First”*

The salience of gender was also apparent in this study. There were two findings related to gender that beg for further research and explanation. One is the extent to which fathers emerged as a common role model for participants' career pursuits. This may simply be a function of the fact that all the fathers from this study worked outside the home, while several of the mothers either did not work outside the home, or worked only part-time. Thus, when turning to a parental role model, it makes sense that the participants would turn to their fathers. However, the literature seems to suggest that there may be a more covert process at work. Several studies demonstrate that the role of fathers is highly significant in the career development of young women (O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien, Friedman, Tipton, & Linn, 2000; Roe & Seligman, 1964; Scott & Mallinckrodt, 2005; Weishar, Green, & Craighead, 1981). Data on the exact influence of mothers versus fathers is conflicting, however (Scott & Mallinckrodt, 2005), thus pointing to a need for more in-depth examination, of the father's role in guiding privileged young women towards specific occupational paths.

While many interviews showed a desire to emulate Dad, just as many interviews also demonstrated an aversion to being a stay-at-home Mom. A few participants noted a vague desire to stay home with a family eventually, but the majority of the young women were adamant that career was the first priority. In fact, the team gathered the sense from the interviews that indicating a desire for marriage and family *more* than career may be taboo among this population. And yet the data provided by these women also suggested that their desire for a meaningful and stimulating career *outside* the home is genuine, and likely not a rehearsed response. So while it may be the norm, it does not mean it lacks sincerity.

It does seem curious, however, that the young women expressed such a proclivity towards emulating their fathers, but had such negative reactions towards taking the path that many of their mothers have taken—being a full-time homemaker. The data hints at possible explanations for this phenomenon, the first being that young women may see homemaking as redundant. At least one participant supported this hypothesis through her declaration that homemaking seems tedious, and leaves little room for advancement. The girls in general seem to highly value intellectual stimulation, variety, and challenge. They may not feel that being a homemaker offers these opportunities, especially if their mothers model any dissatisfaction with their lives in homemaking. Furthermore, it seems “verbal persuasion” might be an issue as well; perhaps the lack of messages coming from Mothers regarding their life as a homemaker makes the young women less interested—a “null environment” for homemaking. Ultimately, being a homemaker may fall into the category of “being stuck”, and is therefore possibly excluded as an option. Similarly, another possible explanation emerges if one examines “Career First” in combination with the “Worth it; Waste it” category. Perhaps the girls simply want to avoid aspiring to homemaking because they do not want to “waste” their difficult and stress-inducing educations. To become a homemaker might feel as though they were wasting the time spent in prestigious or difficult schools. To undergo such an education and not “use” it might be too difficult for these girls.

And yet, the girls do not seem to have completely ruled out homemaking entirely. Some seem to think this might be an option “later in life”, after a career has been established. So in this case, it seems that their response might be due to the pattern that women of their education and social stature must pursue a career before dedicating time

to homemaking. Supporting this is the fact that the data demonstrated practically zero “planning ahead” for family, while planning ahead for career was highly common. The attitude for marriage and family (which they all seem to want) is to say “I’ll cross that bridge when I get there”. At this point in their lives, thoughts about how to combine career and family may seem premature.

Overall, there are many questions that arise from the examination of gender roles. Are privileged young women more likely to emulate their fathers’ careers than their mothers’? Is there just a generational difference regarding the combination of career and family between these young women and their mothers? Do these young women have negative views of homemaking despite their mothers’ modeling? Will their views regarding homemaking alter after college? In general, it would be helpful for future research to further examine the thought process behind the norm of “career first” and the often aversive reaction to homemaking. In addition, it would also be interesting for future research to examine these phenomena longitudinally.

#### *Cultural Backgrounds: Family and School*

The fact that this study examined only young white women will be addressed in the limitations section of this Discussion. But it is perhaps equally relevant here, in the suggestions for future research. It is clear that an individual’s culture may espouse certain values that have a significant bearing on occupational exploration and selection. For example, there was one interview that was conducted in the data collection phase of this study, yet ultimately not included in the final analysis. The participant was a young woman whose parents were not native to the United States, and she spoke at length about the cultural and religious values that dictate the messages she receives regarding her

career choice. She explained that it was almost impossible to talk about her career aspirations without talking about her cultural background. Another participant—included in this analysis—spoke frequently about her religious identification. Unlike the other young woman, this particular participant made little conscious reference to the connection between her religious background and her career development. Yet they seem connected, particularly in her choice of college.

From a psychological perspective, the relationship between culture and career is expected, appropriate, and very consistent with a holistic approach to the study of career development. It is essential to examine privilege and career choice among culturally diverse samples of young women. This should include religious differences, nationalities, race, and ethnicity. Future qualitative studies could approach this by extensively interviewing culturally diverse young women, in addition to their parents, other family members, and possibly Church leaders.

In addition to the culture of the participants' family, knowledge of the relationship between privilege and career would also benefit from a more thorough examination of the culture of specific *schools*. The sample in this study was drawn from a private and parochial school that uses Catholic and specifically Augustinian principles to guide the dissemination of specific values and beliefs. This environment no doubt had an effect on the young women to some degree; one Protestant participant even described how she had come to appreciate the “Catholic way of looking at things”, ultimately influencing her career direction. What might the “Catholic way of looking at things” entail? It seems that at least in part, charity was a strong value held by the school which some participants adopted as a career-related value. The school's commitment to service and charity also

may have influenced the participants' ultimate Social Class Worldview, approaching the lower or working classes from the context of charity, possibly reinforcing the participants' views of "Life Outside St. Charles".

Enough data was not collected to saturate a category related to the school's values and overall culture. Future research on this topic would do well to examine social class privilege and career at a range of schools—private but secular schools, non-preparatory public schools with privileged populations, and private *or* public schools affiliated with other major religions or denominations.

#### *Personality and Identity Development*

Another category created by the team that failed to reach saturation was titled "Independence". The team found a common language emerging from the participants. Some of the young women used words and phrases like "independent" and "self-reliant" to describe themselves, ultimately commenting on career-related values that resulted from these self-reported personality descriptors. The research team was struck by the frequency with which these young women reported, with pride, their tendency towards uniqueness, independence, and the lack of a need to follow "expected" roles. Again, not enough data emerged to saturate a category, but it seems that a greater understanding of personality dimensions would provide a more complete picture of this privileged sample. In fact, some research has focused on the predictive power of personality dimensions in the examination of career aspirations (Larson, Rottinghaus, & Borgen, 2002; Lee, Johnston, Dougherty, 2000). Additionally, theoretical models of identity development such as Erikson's (1968) might be an important starting point to begin analyzing the concurrent development of personality and occupational identity. And finally, it would

be crucial to examine this development with an attention to social class background and social class identity as well. Possible research questions might include: Are there personality constructs that are more commonly found among privileged women? Do these occur naturally or are they the result of societal norms and endorsement of qualities like “independence” and “self-reliance”? Overall, the future investigations could approach the interaction of career and social class from the context of identity theory, providing a useful addition to the wealth of existing literature using Social Cognitive Theory as a framework.

#### *Media Influence on Perceived Career Options*

The presence and influence of the media was discussed only minimally in the interviews conducted for this study. However, it seems impossible to avoid the fact that media images are an important source of occupational and social class information for these young women. After all, adolescents, like everyone, are living in a media-saturated society. The average adolescent in the United States spends 5 ½ hours per day exposed to some kind of media (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002) due to its overwhelming accessibility. It starts in the home, where 53% of adolescents have a television in their room, 29% have a VCR, 70% have a radio, 64% have a CD Player, and 16% have a computer (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999, cited in Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). And due to its presence in places like doctors’ and dentists’ offices, *Seventeen Magazine* estimates that their publication reaches 90% of adolescent girls (Massoni, 2004). The average U.S. adolescent spends 2 ½ hours per day watching television, and 1 out of 6 adolescents spends over 5 hours in a day watching television (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). All these statistics translate into an unavoidable situation wherein

adolescent girls find themselves at the mercy of competing and often inaccurate media messages just as their process of career and vocational identity development begins.

What might be the implications of media saturation for privileged adolescents' perceptions of career and social class? As it was mentioned briefly already, the media misrepresents the frequency of upper-class occupations. Adolescent girls are possibly left to assume that all happy and fulfilled individuals occupy only high-prestige occupations. The media would have them believe there are few options other than white-collar careers (Holtzman, 2000; Massoni, 2004). Jobs seen via the media are often either glamorous, or boring, and these boring or "dead-end jobs" are often portrayed as depressing, and solely the territory of working class individuals. While this dichotomy between extremely high and low prestige has obvious implications for young women's perceived range of occupational options, it also does nothing to broaden their view of the feared "Life Outside St. Charles". Thus, research could enhance our understanding of perceived career options by conducting a more nuanced examination of young women's perceptions of "boring" occupations, how these relate to social class identity, how these images are informed by media representations, and how these issues may ultimately limit young women from considering numerous occupational possibilities.

#### *Value Conflicts—The Struggle for Homeostasis*

A final phenomenon that emerged from this study that deserves further research is the internal conflict arising from a clash in values and interests. In short, what are the effects on career choice when a young woman's desire for class homeostasis is threatened by her occupational interests and goals? While this phenomenon only appeared with three of the participants, the effect seemed strong. These young women displayed a

strong commitment to certain values (travel and charity among them), yet simultaneously aspired to occupations that might prevent the fulfillment of these values. In this study, the young women in question seemed to resolve this conflict by leaning towards occupational goals that allowed for class homeostasis. It is unclear, however, where they learned how to prioritize their values. Thus, future research might focus on the following question: What are the psychological mechanisms that help privileged young women determine the importance of class homeostasis? Parental messages may be one predictive factor, as the participants certainly cited their parents when discussing support for various occupational possibilities. One participant, for example, stated, “I think [my parents] really want me to probably decide on my own and just find something that I really enjoy.” This input includes a comment on values and priorities—namely, enjoy what you do. Yet it provides little instruction for navigating the potential turmoil that arises when “enjoying what you do” may result in a step *down* in social class status. Overall, it seems important to gather more information—perhaps qualitative—on the decision-making strategies these young women use when they experience the pain of deciding between homeostasis and occupational interests or enjoyment.

#### Implications for Practice

The differentiation between upper and lower class careers has been deeply ingrained, and we begin teaching children about those differences even prior to adolescence (Gottfredson, 1981; West, Sweeting, & Speed, 2001). This is a systemic issue, and therefore any implications for practice need to occur in our conceptualization and mindset, not just our counseling interventions. The results of the current study provide important information about the way in which privileged young women process

their exposure to occupations, messages, and social class worldview, and how they internalize that information into a vivid picture of their “possible selves”. It is difficult to suggest implications for practice when it is likely that the young women in this sample see few, if any, problems to be solved. The data suggest that these young women are highly motivated, driven, bright individuals with caring parents and positive role models. They will graduate from high school and attend an array of prestigious and well-renowned colleges without having to worry (much) about tuition or cost. Yet these privileges comprise the first important implication for working with these young women. They do possess a great deal of social capital and resources that can help them achieve a majority of their goals. The young women in this study seem to be aware of this fact, but other privileged adolescent young women may not share this awareness. Parents and practitioners could use this information to empower young women and teach them to utilize their social capital wisely, ultimately helping them realize their occupational goals.

However, some young women from these privileged backgrounds may be fully aware of the likelihood that they possess the resources necessary to meet their career aspirations. What then, are the implications for the “limited career options” these young women are unlikely to perceive? While their perception may be one of limitless possibilities, the data also suggest that they have been exposed to a somewhat narrow range of occupations, lifestyles, and even values. Counselors and practitioners might begin by developing a simple awareness of the fact that privilege may result in the perception of very few occupational possibilities and that it does impact the career options adolescents see for themselves. With this anticipatory awareness, counselors may be able to combat some of the deeply ingrained class beliefs held by privileged

young women. A more thorough awareness and understanding of social class could also result in a better comprehension of the psychological difficulty that arises when interests and skills clash with socioeconomically-driven goals.

Practitioners would also do well to actively convey knowledge and openness to a diverse range of career options, not just those that seem stereotypically appropriate for young women of privileged backgrounds. Counselors may not possess the power to erase the influence of social class on perceived career options, but they can minimize that effect by giving high school students different messages and at least *introducing* diverse options. It could be enlightening for a student from a middle or upper-class background to hear a counselor propose a career that she had always perceived as “beneath” her. The counselor possesses a unique power to challenge the existing status-quo regarding career options for adolescents of all social classes. The power of suggestibility was evident in the data from this study, so it seems important to use that tool to create an even wider range of options than what these young women already perceive.

Another place for practitioners to direct their attention is towards the family of origin. The family is often where students first develop ideas about attainable or acceptable careers, and the social class of that family of origin helps shape those early messages (Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Individuals often choose occupations based on parents’ occupations (Heaven, 2001; Mannheim & Seger, 1993), and their parents’ occupations have also been influenced by social class. Overall, the family of origin is potentially the earliest and most powerful predictor of career choices and perceived career options (Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). The young women in this study were no exception, vividly demonstrating the parental influence on

their career choices. It therefore seems logical to involve the adolescent's family when striving to create an occupational paradigm shift. A number of high school career intervention programs involve parents which is often more effective than programming that involves only counselors and teachers (Flores et al., 2003). It would be helpful to introduce the potential effects of social class into some of these high school programs in order to facilitate awareness in not only the adolescents, but in their parents as well.

While it was only mentioned directly by three participants, many of the young women in this study alluded to the tension between their interests and their desire to maintain class homeostasis, or a privileged lifestyle. This was most evident when the young women aspired to service-oriented professions such as social work or teaching, which require hands-on interaction with diverse individuals, without a great deal of monetary compensation. Practitioners and parents would do well to pursue this inner conflict with privileged young women who are in the throes of making decisions about their career path. It would be helpful to anticipate, recognize, and normalize their struggle, and to expose them to other role models who have perhaps decided to pursue an occupation (like social work) that might feel like a step "down" in its ability to provide financial security. Privileged young women may ultimately prioritize homeostasis over these "service" interests, but an enhanced exposure and validation of the alternatives might result in a less ambiguous picture of traditionally middle class occupations, thus maximizing their perceived options.

And finally, perhaps the most important implication for working with privileged adolescent young women is to just acknowledge their reality. They are the products of not only a privileged lifestyle that seeks to maintain privilege, but also of a society that

saturates them with images reinforcing those values. It is important to help these young women broaden their views of the working class, the middle class, and the occupations associated with each. In terms of their future, there is more variability and there are more options than they may think. However, it is also crucial that these messages be relayed without invalidating their lived experience. Their potentially narrow and circumscribed list of potential occupations does not come from a desire to appear snobby, or a desire to maintain class hierarchies. Their perceived options are simply an inevitable byproduct of the information and data they have experienced both personally and vicariously. In addition, they have experienced privilege with which it may be very difficult to part. In other words, telling them to blindly aspire to careers they never considered may be unsuccessful. A better route might be helping these young women to understand that their struggle (if they experience one) is understandable and natural. There are, obviously, a multitude of occupations that rest somewhere between physician and factory worker. As practitioners, perhaps the first step is simply understanding these young women and educating them about a world outside their own where they can utilize their gifts and education in unique ways that are still “worth it”.

#### Limitations

Grounded theory is, by nature, a lengthy process. This form of analysis and inquiry does not lend itself easily to many shortcuts. Thus, due to the time constraints of writing a dissertation and collecting data from long-distance, there were certainly some limitations to this particular study.

One limitation that has been mentioned already is the lack of traditional theoretical sampling. If strictly adhering to Grounded Theory procedures, the researcher

should collect data, begin analyzing that data, identify gaps and directions for further inquiry, and begin collecting data again with an attention to those gaps. Due to time constraints and logistical difficulties, this method of data collection was not possible. (See Chapter 3, Methods for a thorough discussion of how analysis was conducted). While the team analysis was conducted in such a way that theoretical sampling was somewhat “mimicked”, this is still no substitute for the traditional procedures. Subsequently, this led to gaps in our analysis, and places where the data did not seem saturated. Ultimately, the team made every effort to include only saturated categories in the final Category List, but the depth and complexity of the final results may still have suffered from the lack of theoretical sampling.

Another methodological limitation was the lack of variability in data collection methods. In the qualitative literature, this is captured through “Triangulation”, which refers to the use of multiple methods of investigation (Patton, 2002). Triangulation can be achieved through a few different strategies. One is through “investigator triangulation” (Patton, 2002) which involves using several different researchers in the analysis. In this study, this was achieved via the team analysis model where consensus had to be reached while coding and engaging in category development. However, another type of triangulation is “data triangulation”, which is the source of the limitation in this study. This type of triangulation involves using several different sources when gathering data. The intention was for the e-mailed “Follow-Up Surveys” to help accomplish this mode of triangulation, but the minimal responses from participants made this unsuccessful. Descriptive field notes do comprise another source of data, which were included in the analysis, but only minimally. Field notes were not coded and

included in the final Category Lists. If more substantial field notes had been recorded and analyzed, this could have been an effective means of achieving triangulation. And finally, “member-checks”, another important source of both triangulation and auditing, were not completed for this study, again due to time constraints and the logistic difficulty of contacting participants.

A final limitation of this study involves the demographic make-up of both the analysis team and the sample. As for the sample, this was partly addressed in “Directions for Future Research” as well as “Methods”. The sample was an all-white group of young women. The homogenous nature of the sample is in part a reflection of the demographic composition of the school these young women attend, which is primarily white. A homogenous sample at this phase of inquiry, however, is also appropriate in order to gather a complete picture of social class privilege, without any additionally powerful variables (like race, ethnicity, or nationality) that would create a high range of variability among the sample. However, it is important to note that the lack of including any young women of color in the sample is very much a function of this inquiry being the “first step” in the overall examination of class and privilege. Race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and culture are clearly vital variables to examine, and will be the subject of future research endeavors. Thus, the lack of diversity in this study’s sample should provide the impetus for future inquiries with larger and more diverse samples of young privileged women.

The all-white, all-female analysis team, however, is a limitation of this investigation. Again, the demographic composition of the analysis team was a result of logistical issues. The three women on this analysis team came highly recommended, and

were each willing and available to dedicate extra time in their schedules for this *volunteer* opportunity. While there was some socioeconomic variability among the analysis team members, there was minimal geographic variability and no ethnic or gender variability. While the team seemed comfortable offering different perspectives and challenging one another, a higher degree of diversity among the members could have likewise resulted in more diverse and nuanced interpretations of the data. A relatively privileged all-white and all-female analysis team may have a personally biased interpretation of a sample of participants who was so demographically similar. As a team, every effort was made (through self-reflexive discussion) to combat that possible source of bias.

#### Concluding Remarks

Despite its limitation, several phenomena emerged from this qualitative analysis that speak to the overall lived experience of being a privileged young woman at the cusp of developing career goals and a social class worldview. Perhaps the most substantial conclusion one can draw from this investigation is that class and career are, indeed, very much intertwined, but the relationship is far from simple. These young women do not eliminate a career in elementary teaching, for example, because “it just isn’t prestigious enough” or “it looks bad”. Their reality is much more nuanced. Instead, they engage in an often messy cognitive and emotional process where the pros and cons of various careers are weighed according to: mental models of others in that occupation, verbal feedback regarding the occupation, the likelihood of “excelling” in that occupation, and the ability of that occupation to give them the lifestyle they desire. When one considers their highly privileged world and the lifestyle to which they are accustomed, it is no wonder that their final list of occupations sometimes contains little more than “doctor,

lawyer, and executive”, as one participant so succinctly stated. In sum, these young women do not seem to feel that certain careers are beneath them. Rather, they just want to believe that their gifts, their privileges, and their intense push for academic success are leading them somewhere that makes sense—that makes all their effort “worth it”. If their career pursuits are guided by primarily this desire, their privilege subsequently dictates a highly prestigious and somewhat limited range of possibilities.

The paradox arising from this data, however, is that the young women from this sample do not seem to perceive “limited options”. While their worldview of classes outside their own is somewhat narrow, they nonetheless have some awareness that they hold the necessary advantages to reach their prestigious career goals—to “excel”. They have witnessed numerous others in their same class background be rewarded for their hard work, so why should they not experience the same? Therefore, they perceive no limitations. They are motivated, encouraged by countless family members and teachers, and possess the social capital to fulfill their goals. Their future looks bright. But there is also a whisper of discontent that emerges from the interviews of a few of these young women. These young women express a fear of venturing off the expected path—partly due to the fear of abandoning their obvious comfort, and partly due to the fear of “wasting” their educational privilege. From a psychological perspective, this hints at a somewhat less freeing possibility. How might it be difficult for these young women to believe in limitless career options, yet experience validation for only a very narrow range. What conflict arises for individuals who live in a country where the statement “you can be whatever you want” is equated with “you can be something *impressive* if you want”.

It is the hope that future data collections will shed light on these questions. For the purpose of this study, however, it is important to stay grounded in the existing data—to speak for this particular sample of young women. And from their experiences, the following can be concluded: These are bright, privileged, hard-working young women who hold prestigious career goals that may or may not present a complete picture of the potential careers that could fulfill their diverse interests. They nonetheless perceive many options, and take comfort in the accurate belief that their lives, their school, and their social capital will help achieve their prestigious goals and dreams.

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Appendix 1:  
Initial Recruitment Script

E-mail and Mail version:

Dear NAME,

Hello, my name is Anne Scott, and I'm a graduate student in psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, as well as an alum from the class of 1998! Last winter, I was at St. C collecting data for a research project for my doctoral dissertation. You may remember filling out a survey which asked questions about your career goals. When you consented to complete that survey, you also indicated that you would be willing to be contacted for a "follow-up" study which I'll be completing this spring.

I'm now asking for your help, along with a small group of other students, with this follow-up part of the study, which involves my interviewing some students about issues similar to the ones in the survey you completed: career goals and how your background may influence those goals. If you choose to participate, I would meet with you for an interview that would last approximately 1 to 1½ hours, sometime during the month of January...at your convenience. You would also be asked to fill out a short survey later in the spring, via e-mail. In all parts of the study, your responses will be kept totally confidential, and your participation is always completely voluntary.

If you choose to participate and complete both parts of the study (the interview and survey) you would be entered in a drawing for one of three \$100.00 gift certificates to Utica Square.

If you are interested in participating, you will need to do two things...

1. I will need to talk with your parents in order to obtain their permission for you to participate. **So if you are interested, please respond to this e-mail/letter by giving/sending me your phone number, and a good time of day to reach one of your parents.**
2. I will also need to mail you and your parents each a copy of the consent form, which includes more details about the study. I would collect that written form when we do the interview, if you choose to participate. **If you are interested, please send your mailing address as well.**

Thanks so much! I hope to hear from you soon!

Anne Scott, M.A.  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
573-874-1685  
[ABScott@mizzou.edu](mailto:ABScott@mizzou.edu)

Phone version:

“Hi NAME, my name is Anne Scott and I graduated in 1998, and am now a graduate student at the University of Missouri. I’m calling in regards to a research study that I’m conducting. Do you remember filling out a survey during your English class last year? When you consented to complete that survey, you also indicated that you would be willing to be contacted for a “follow-up” study which I’ll be completing this spring.”

“So now I’m asking for your help with this follow-up part of the study, which involves interviewing some students about issues similar to the ones in the survey you completed: social class beliefs and also career goals. If you choose to participate, I would meet with you for an interview that would last approximately 1 to 1½ hours, sometime during the month of January...at your convenience. You would also be asked to fill out a short survey later in the spring, via e-mail. In all parts of the study, your responses will be kept totally confidential, and your participation is always completely voluntary.”

“Also, If you choose to participate and complete both parts of the study (the interview and survey) you would be entered in a drawing for one of three \$100.00 gift certificates to Utica Square.”

“Do you think this sounds like something you’d be interested in participating in? Great! I will need to talk with your parents in order to obtain their permission for you to participate. Would this be a good time to talk with one of them? If not, I can contact them at a later time.”

“I will also be sending a more detailed consent form to you in the mail, which I will collect when we do the interview. Does that sound okay? Where should I send those forms? After I’ve spoken with your parents, I’ll be in touch again in order to schedule our interview.”

“Thanks again!”

Appendix 2:  
Phone Script for Parental Consent

“Hi, Mr./Mrs./Dr./Ms. NAME,

This is Anne Scott, and I’m a doctoral student at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and am also an alum from the class of ’98. Hopefully NAME OF CHILD told you I would be calling...did they?”

“Well, I’m calling in regards to a research study I’m conducting, which I started last winter and am now moving into the second phase. Last winter, NAME OF CHILD filled out a survey for some research I have been conducting on career aspirations in adolescents, and how those are influenced by their particular background. That was the first phase of the study. Now what I’m doing is following-up with randomly selected students who indicated last semester that they would be willing to be contacted for the second part of this study.”

“I contacted NAME via METHOD OF CONTACT and he/she indicated to me that he/she is still interested in participating in the study. This part of the study involves participating in an interview about issues similar to the ones that were in the survey they completed: social class beliefs and also career goals. If NAME chooses to participate, I would meet with him/her for an interview that would last approximately 1 to 1½ hours, sometime during the month of January...at your convenience. I hope to make this as easy for both you and NAME as possible, and am therefore willing to come to your home to conduct the interview.”

“In the interview, I’ll be asking your son/daughter a number of questions about both their career goals, and other demographic factors such as social class identity. They do not have to answer all the questions; if at any point they feel uncomfortable answering a question, they are free to skip that question. They are also free to stop the entire interview at any time, and there’s no penalty for ending the interview.”

“I will be recording this interview on a tape recorder, but the content of the interview will be kept totally confidential. Also, if the results of this project are published, your son/daughter’s name will not be attached to any of your responses or any of the information you provide.”

“NAME will also be asked to fill out a short survey later in the spring, via e-mail. In all parts of this study, his/her responses will be kept totally confidential, and his/her participation is always completely voluntary. Again, he/she can withdraw from the study at any time.”

“Do you have any questions at this point?”

“I’d like to go ahead and ask you if you might give your tentative verbal consent for NAME to participate in this study...if you consent, then I will go ahead and work with NAME to schedule an interview time for sometime in January.”

“I am going to mail you a written consent form, which contains all of the information (and some more details) that I just told you verbally. In order for NAME to participate, I’ll need for you to sign that form and I will collect it on the day I conduct the interview.”

“Thanks so much for your help and your willingness to listen and consider this opportunity for NAME.”

Appendix 3:  
Written Parental Consent Form

Dear PARENT'S NAME,

Thank you for visiting with me on the telephone regarding your son/daughter's participation in my research project. I will be scheduling the interview with your son/daughter very soon, but before I can conduct the interview, I will need your written consent. This consent form outlines the rights of your son/daughter. If you consent to their participation, please sign this form and I will collect it when I meet with your son/daughter for the interview.

Again, the goal of my study is to understand more about how one's demographic background can affect a high school student's occupational choices, as well as his/her level of confidence in pursuing certain occupations. Your son/daughter's participation in this study will provide much needed information to professionals who are trying to provide occupational guidance, and who are trying to maximize the number of occupations that high school students perceive as options.

In this study, your son/daughter will be completing a one-on-one interview with me, which will be tape-recorded and will last approximately 1 to 1½ hours.

In the interview, I'll be asking your son/daughter a number of questions about both their social class identity and their career goals. They do not have to answer all the questions; if at any point they feel uncomfortable answering a question, they are free to skip that question. They are also free to stop the entire interview at any time. There is no penalty for ending the interview.

I will be recording this interview on a tape recorder, but the content of the interview will be kept totally confidential. I will be transcribing the interview, but your son/daughter's name will not appear anywhere in the transcript. The transcript of the interview will be identified by a code, and the key to that code will only be accessible to myself and members of my research team. Also, if the results of this project are published, your son/daughter's name will not be attached to any of your responses or any of the information you provide.

There are no risks to participating in this study that your son/daughter would not also encounter during their day-to-day life. However, since I will be asking in-depth questions about their career goals, there is the chance that they may want more information about careers and occupations. I will be providing them with a list of some helpful resources in case they want to talk to someone more thoroughly about their career path.

In addition to the interview, I will also be asking your son/daughter to complete a follow-up questionnaire during the spring. This will be completed via e-mail.

There are also some benefits to participating in this study. By participating, your son/daughter will be helping increase knowledge about how high school students and adolescents make career choices. Also, if they complete this interview and also the follow-up survey in the spring, you will be entered into a drawing for one of three

\$100.00 gift certificates to Utica Square. There is no penalty if you decide NOT to participate.

You have the right to ask any questions about this research project. If you have any questions regarding this study or your son/daughter's participation, please feel free to contact me, or you may also contact my advisor, Dr. Mary Heppner (numbers are listed below). If you have questions regarding your son/daughter's rights as a research participant, contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia at (573) 882-9585.

If you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in this study, please sign this form.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity.

**I grant my son/daughter, \_\_\_\_\_, permission to participate in this research study.**

(your child's name)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

Anne Scott, M.A.

Doctoral Candidate  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Columbia  
573-874-1685  
[ABScott@mizzou.edu](mailto:ABScott@mizzou.edu)

Mary J. Heppner, Ph.D.

Professor  
University of Missouri-  
Columbia  
573-882-8574  
[HeppnerM@missouri.edu](mailto:HeppnerM@missouri.edu)

Appendix 4:  
Verbal Youth Assent Script

(to be read on the day of the interview)

Thank you so much for participating in this project! Before we get started, there are a few things I want to go over, just to make you sure you understand how this process will work.

First of all, I will need the signed consent form from your parent/guardian...do you have that? Great...thanks. Second of all, as a participant in this study, you need to understand the goal of the project. The goal of this project is to learn more about how a person's social class background, as well as his/her perceptions of social class can affect the choices he/she makes about a future occupation. Do you have any questions about that?

You also need to understand the procedures and guidelines of participating. Today we'll be doing the interview; I'll be asking you a number of questions about both your social class and your career goals, but this should feel more like a conversation. You do not have to answer all the questions; if at any point you do not feel comfortable answering a question, just let me know and we'll move on. You are also free to stop the interview at any time. There is no penalty for ending the interview. Does that all make sense? Do you have any questions about that?

I will be recording this interview on a tape recorder, but the content of the interview will be kept totally confidential. I will be transcribing your interview, and your name will not appear anywhere in the transcript. The transcript of your interview will be identified by a code, and the key to that code will only be accessible to myself and members of my research team. Also, if the results of this project are published, your name will not be attached to any of your responses or any of the information you provide.

There are no risks to participating in this study that you would not also encounter during your day-to-day life. However, since I will be asking in-depth questions about your career goals, there is the chance that you may want more information about careers and occupations. I will be providing you with a list of some helpful resources in case you want to talk to someone more thoroughly about your career path.

There are also some benefits to participating in this study. By participating, you will be helping increase knowledge about how high school students and adolescents make career choices. If you complete this interview and also the follow-up survey in the spring, you will be entered into a drawing for one of three \$100.00 gift certificates to Utica Square. There is no penalty if you decide NOT to participate.

You have the right to ask any questions about this research project. I will provide you with a sheet that has my contact information, the contact information for my advisor, and the contact information for our campus Institutional Review Board.

Do you have any questions? Do you wish to go ahead and proceed with the interview?

Appendix 5:  
Interview Protocol

Before the actual interview begins, I will ask some introductory questions that will serve two functions: 1) Rapport-building, and 2) Information about the participant's social class background. Questions will be asked conversationally, but may include some of the following examples:

- How was your holiday-break? Did you do anything fun? Did you go anywhere special?
- Can you tell me a little bit about your family? What do your parents do for a living? Where did they go to college? Do you have any brothers or sisters? How old? Did they go to college? Where? What are they doing now? (If older)

When it seems natural and appropriate, I will begin the rest of the interview protocol:

1. To what extent have you thought about your future career? What have been some of your thoughts about career?
2. What do you think are some of the best ways to decide on an occupation? In other words, what factors do you think are important to consider?
3. What types of career expectations do your friends and family have for you? What types of occupations might your parents expect you to pursue? What types of occupations might your friends expect you to pursue? Your teachers? Do they have other expectations, such as family or marriage expectations?
4. What kinds of things do your parents say to you about careers?
5. Where would you say you have received the majority of your information about possible careers?
6. What comes to your mind when you hear the term "social class"? (Listen to his/her definition; then define).
7. How would you define your social class background? What kinds of things did you think about (just now) when deciding what your social class background is?
8. Tell me about your extended family. What are some of the occupations of people in your extended family? Your grandparents? Uncles and aunts and cousins?
9. I am going to name some occupations, and I want you to tell me, on a 1 to 10 scale, how likely you would be to pursue each of these. When I name them, do NOT take into account your interest or skill level. For each, answer why or why not.
  - a. Librarian
  - b. Physician
  - c. Real Estate Developer
  - d. Banker
  - e. Nurse
  - f. Attorney
  - g. Office Manager/Secretary
  - h. Accountant
  - i. College Professor
  - j. Artist/Musician
  - k. Paralegal
  - l. Medical Lab Technician
  - m. Forest Ranger
  - n. Stay-at-home Mom/Dad
  - o. Teacher (primary or secondary school)

10. What occupations would you be hesitant to pursue because of how it might look to your friends or family? What might they be thinking if you chose those occupations?
11. When (if ever) have you felt “held back” or limited by your social class?
12. When (if ever) have you felt like there was pressure on you to achieve, or do, certain things in your career, or in your life in general?
13. Do you plan to attend college? Why or why not?
14. How do you feel about the possibility of pursuing a post-graduate degree? For example, going to graduate school, medical school, law school, MBA school, etc?
15. Do you have any older brothers or sisters? If so, what have you observed about his/her career search process? Do you agree with, or approve of, the way he/she has made career decisions? What might you do differently?
16. Picture yourself 10 years from now. As I read the following questions, think about a “typical day” you would like to have. What do you imagine? (Note: The purpose of this exercise is to provide possible cues that will help gain some idea of the participant’s aspired lifestyle. Many of the participants may not know exactly what type of occupation they wish to pursue, but they may have ideas about their adult lifestyle, which relates to social class.)
  - a. Where do you live? (location)
  - b. Do you live in a house? An apartment? Do you live with anyone?
  - c. How do you get to work in the morning? Do you drive? Take a taxi? A subway? Walk? Do you even have to leave the house?
  - d. Where do you go when you go to work? An office? A school? What kind of building? Inside or outside?
  - e. When you’re at work, do you report to a boss when you arrive? Do others report to you? Do you have your own office?
  - f. What type of work are you doing during the day? Caring for your own children? Working with customers? Working with colleagues?
  - g. What do you do when you get off work? What time is it? Is there anyone there when you get home?
  - h. What do you do in your spare time?
17. As you were just answering the above questions, or picturing your life 10 years from now, what were you basing your decisions on? Were you thinking about how your parents live? How your friends’ parents live? Where did you get those images? From television shows? Movies? From other sources?
18. How has it felt to talk about your career choices?
19. How has it felt to talk about your social class?
20. What’s the one question I should have asked that I didn’t? What would your answer have been?

Appendix 6:

Follow-Up Survey & Returned Sample Survey

### **Follow-Up Survey:**

\*\*The content of this survey will be slightly different for each participant, and will be driven by their responses during the interview. The purpose of this survey is to ask further questions that I may have neglected to ask during the first interview, or to simply gain more information about something the participant mentioned in the interview. All of the questions will be fairly brief, and will be easily answered in a paragraph response.

However, all the participants will be asked the following two questions in this follow-up survey:

1. Since the time of your interview, have you thought of anything else related to your career goals that you would like to mention?
2. Have you visited with friends or parents about any of the things we talked about in our interview? What kinds of things have you discussed?

### **Sample Returned Survey:**

hey anne- i would be more than happy to answer the following questions:

*1. Since the time of your interview, have you thought of anything else related to your career goals and/or social class that you would like to mention?*

i dont have any update on the career goals, i am just going into what i enjoy studying as of right now. social class isnt a very big deal to me, i have seen the "comfortable" lifestyle and i just want to be financially secure in the future. i have friends that are from some of the wealthiest families in CITY, and i also have friends that are very dependant on the government for financial benefits. however, none of my friends' characters are determined by their social class, i would like to hope that mine isnt either.

*2. Have you visited with friends or parents about any of the things we talked about in our interview? What kinds of things have you discussed?*

i havent really talked to my friends or parents about the interview.

*3. How do you think your career aspirations might be different if you'd gone to a school other than St. Charles High School?*

SCH surprisingly provides a rather aesthetic perspective in many areas of learning, especially in literature. SCH has shown me a how i want to live, and what i need to do to get there. i want to be able to travel when i am older, so i will find a career that either provides the opportunity or money for me to do so. through things such as the europe trip, i have become more cultured and more aware of the world around me. many people misinterpret SCH as an extremely conservative school, without many opportunities to experience other paths of life simply because it is full of wealthy, midtown kids. the truth is, i see myself as much more aware and open-minded than many of my friends from other schools. i attribute that to my going to SCH. i think that if i went to any other school i would have gotten caught up in high school drama, and wouldn't have been able to grow and experience as much as i have. SCH has taught me to appreciate the finer things

in life, to stay open-minded towards all people and ideas, and also not get caught up in the superficial side of money. it has been a great experience.

thank you, "Meredith"

Appendix 7:  
Agenda for Team Training

## Scott Dissertation Analysis Team Meeting #1

August 25, 2006, 2:00-4:00

Present: Anne Scott, Kristen Kleffner, Sara Ensenberger, and Kim Lay

### I. Introductions and Getting to know each other

A. Working as a Team

B. Confidentiality and Sharing

C. My project:

1. How much emphasis do these adolescents from high SES backgrounds report placing on their social class when forming their beliefs about potential careers?
2. What do adolescents from high SES backgrounds perceive to be their career options? Are there specific occupations that these students perceive as unacceptable (not options) as a result of their perceived social class?
3. Do the students report any barriers that are unique to their social class background? (i.e. Do they report any types of pressure or difficulties in forming career goals that are directly related to their economically privileged background?)
4. What are the primary sources from which the students seem to gain their beliefs about socially acceptable and socially unacceptable career options? (i.e. From parents? From the media? From friends?)

### II. The Process

A. In general, the process of Grounded Theory

B. The importance of constant comparison, questions, and dialogue

C. Safety in the group

D. Self-Reflexivity

### III. Training

A. Binders

B. Grounded Theory more specifically

C. Intro to Open Coding

D. Practice!

a. Skating article

b. Strauss and Corbin excerpt

c. Transcript

### IV. For Next Meeting

A. Decide on Meeting time

B. Assign transcripts

Appendix 8:

Sample Excerpt from a Coded Interview Transcript

**From “J” Interview, Coded on 11/27/06:**

<p>Respondent: uh-huh , yeah, that’s one for sure because I know, <i>parents</i>  I’ve had a very happy upbringing with my parents <i>lifestyle</i>  and so, wanting to create, and I’m nanny for, once <i>choices</i>  a week, and all during the summer for some people  who, they have, the Siegfried’s, and I baby sit for <i>Modeling family</i>  <i>values</i>  their two kids and they have a big family name and  talk about society pressure and the mom is very <i>Values surpassing</i>  “<i>name</i>”  into just creating her own little family and trying  to live outside of that name, and so I kind of have  that same, I’ve learned a lot from her and my <i>Values providing</i>  <i>similar</i>  parents in just creating a happy, comfortable home, <i>lifestyle for kids</i>  sending my kids to school, at St. C or at a place <i>valuing private</i>  <i>education</i>  like St. C, which is something, you know, I’m  pretty, in fact I would say I’m very independent <i>Independence</i>  and so, I want to major in something and pursue a  career where I could support myself for as long as <i>Self-reliance;</i>  “<i>support</i>  I needed to, and so that’s definitely something that, <i>myself</i>”  and I feel like my sister, I’m sure she’ll be able to  support herself, um, and she’s very smart, but  I know that’s one of her worries in going into  teaching, she probably wouldn’t live in Oklahoma  if she were going to do it because it’s one of the  worse states for that, but you know, that type  <i>lucrative</i>  of thing, wondering if I didn’t get married until  the age of 35, could I support myself...  <i>marriage</i></p>	<p><i>Wanting to emulate</i></p> <p><i>Valuing her parents</i></p> <p><i>choices</i></p> <p><i>Modeling family</i></p> <p><i>Values surpassing</i></p> <p><i>Values providing</i></p> <p><i>lifestyle for kids</i></p> <p><i>valuing private</i></p> <p><i>Independence</i></p> <p><i>Self-reliance;</i></p> <p><i>myself</i>”</p> <p><i>Salary is a concern</i></p> <p><i>Values higher salary</i></p> <p><b><i>Too Risky</i></b></p> <p><i>Considering less</i></p> <p><i>occ</i></p> <p><i>Considering later</i></p>
<p>Interviewer: yeah...</p>	
<p>Respondent: and could I live a comfortable life, um, because I  <i>with less</i>  do want to, not necessarily have what my parents  have, or provide for my kids everything that they  <i>she may</i></p>	<p><i>Can be comfortable</i></p> <p><i>than she grew up with</i></p> <p><i>Acknowledging that</i></p>

- provided for me, but I would especially like to *have less money than*  
*parents*
- provide education, like they did for me, and a few *Wants to provide*  
*education*
- things, and a few of the experiences that I have had *Valuing Education*  
 --I don't expect to live in a house like my parents or  
 things like that, but, you know, stuff that I really  
 appreciated I want my kids to be able to appreciate,  
 so...that's, financially I want to have a career that *Desire to emulate*  
*parents*
- could do that, um and aside from that I just want to *Values enjoyment of*  
*occ*
- do something that I don't hate going to work...
- Interviewer: yeah
- Respondent: my dad seems to really like, I think he likes what *Observes father's*  
*autonomy*
- he's doing and he's gotten his business to where *Father Influence*  
*admires Dad's*
- he can work at home, he, um, gets to eat lunch  
*autonomy*
- with my mom every day and if he's got a golf  
*Father Message*  
*Values leisure time*
- tournament on TV he wants to watch, he can take  
 a couple hours off, that type of thing and he's, um,  
 he coaches, well, for five years he was technically  
 coached basketball at St. C and this year he retired  
 even though he's been at practice every day...and  
 goes to all the games and sits on the bench, but he's  
 coach Riley's assistant coach and so, he can leave  
 at 3:00 and go do that and so that's nice...I don't  
*Indirect Family*
- Value*
- know where I was going with that...um,...don't  
*Message*  
*climbing the ladder*  
*hard work leads to*
- know...and he's worked hard enough to get to  
 where he can do that type of thing, so that's  
*autonomy*
- something that I would definitely want as far as  
 having a family, but if I was working with two  
*Valuing ability to*  
*spend time*
- kids, I could either work out of my hours or  
*with family*  
*Wanting to emulate*
- manage hours where I could, play their sporting  
*Dad*
- events and take them out, that type of thing... *Father Influence*
- Interviewer: sounds like the way that your parents have  
 raised you and just been, sounds like they've  
 just been really involved and you want a career

that gives you the possibility to be the same kind of parent...

Respondent: right...and I mean, primarily that's what it is, is, you know, there are a few things that my parents have done that I'm just like, I will not over my dead body, handle the situation this *with* way, but 98% of it has been, you know, that's what I will do...and so that's been a huge *style* blessing from that perspective, a lot of my friends, it's just like, that house is hell, *unique* so...um...yeah...

*Values relationship*  
*parents*  
*Admires parenting*  
*Aware of "blessings"*  
*Believes her family is*

Interviewer: yeah, that's cool, so, sounds like that's one of the biggest things that you've been thinking about is just kind of like, whatever the occupation does this give me some autonomy, some free time, like if I work my way up, could I work out of the home, something similar to what your parents have done...

Respondent: well that's one thing, and I think, I don't know, I *Enjoyment vs.* *Advancement* struggle with teaching, cause I would love to teach *Struggling with decision* and I love kids, but it's kind of like, you know, *Considering enjoyment* well once you're teaching, well unless you want to *Fear of being Stuck* go to college, there's no really progression there, *Desire to excel* you have to really be content with that, and which, *Room for advancement* I think could be, but it's kind of...you have to consider that, so... *Struggling with being content with no progression*

Interviewer: ...do you think there are any other factors that, as you're getting into college and thinking about careers, are there other things that you think will come up?

Respondent: well, definitely one thing for me is, ok, here's what I've been given, this family, this school... *"Been given"* I feel like I need to use it to my best advantage, *"Waste it"* and *Aware of privilege*

whether it's to, for my family's benefit, not so much for that, just to benefit society...why was *Conscience/Charity*

I placed in this family, I don't know, but since I *help*

was, I feel an obligation to help someone who wasn't, so I think that's definitely something, beyond just supporting my own family, I would like to have the financial flexibility to support *others*

someone else or something else, even if it does *based*

mean working in an environment that I might, you know, if I would love teaching, number one, *outweighs*

I would rather work in something that I might enjoy a little less just to be able to do something like that...so

*opportunities*  
*Social*

*Feels an obligation to*

*Desires money to help*

*Considering careers*

*on salary for charity*  
*Social conscience*

*enjoyment*

Respondent: yeah, so talk about society, not necessarily pressure, but um, growing up at St. C you just, not everyone does, but I feel like I need to do something beyond my little realm, so, and maybe that is teaching at a long term school or just teaching in general, that is definitely something that benefits society, but there's lot of, and it's kind of, you know, my dad, he's not going out into society and actually, physically working or doing something like that, but he helps, he works *service* here and that saves us money or my mom volunteers, there's just lots of different avenues *charity* that you can do that, so with a career I either want to have the time to be able to do some type of service, or I want to be able to fund something or something like that...

*Social Distancing*  
*Aware that she lives*  
*in a "little realm"*

*Values benefiting*  
*society*  
***Parental Influence***  
*Not direct service*  
*Family modeling*

*and giving*  
*Emulating parents*

*wants to "give back"*  
*but not directly*

Appendix 9:  
Sample Agenda for Analysis Meeting

Scott Dissertation Analysis Team Meeting #6

October 12, 2006, 11:30 am-12:30 am

Present: Anne Scott, Kristen Kleffner, Sara Ensenberger, and Kim Lay

I. Explain Process for Today

E. Development of Categories and Subcategories

1. Categories related to social class—what have we seen across interviews?

F. Initial thoughts on major relationships and concepts.

II. Below are some of the "thoughts to ponder" from our last meeting. Obviously, we don't have nearly enough data to answer these questions. This is merely to get you thinking about some of the things that arose in the first two interviews, so you can look for the same (or different!) themes in the next ones.

1. What kind of "Groupthink" is going on with these girls? Do they aspire to the same levels of occupations because they're afraid of decreasing their standard of living? Or is it the competitive environment? How else might their community be playing a role?
2. Why are they able to be so decisive in their aspirations? Is it simply because they've been exposed to more career information and therefore have more knowledge upon which to base a decision? Is it related to how much their parents talk to them about careers? What have we seen in the first 2 interviews?
3. What's the mechanism that's creating so much ambition? Is it the competition as "A1" suggested? Did "C" mention this?
4. 4. The belief in a "Meritocracy"...do both the girls believe this? If so, how do they make sense of this and also stay so aware of inheritance? Is it because they have always been recognized for their achievements? Are they just naive?

III. For Next Meeting

C. Things to do while coding this time

- Think about previous transcripts
- Category development will continue
- Self-Reflexivity!

D. When a new thought/theme/concept emerges from the data, use line-by-line coding (or as close to that as you can). When there is something that we've covered before, think CAREFULLY about whether or not it fits in a category we've already developed. If it does fit, great...code it that way. But if it causes you to re-think some of our categories, make note of that.

**G. NOTE: It's okay if the content of future interviews conflicts with what we've developed so far. That's normal. Just make note of it.**

Appendix 10:  
Excerpt from Final Category List

## II. Categorical Group: “Shared Perceptions of Achievement”

**Developed on:** 9/8/06; 9/15/06; 10/12/06; 10/24/06; 11/01/06; 11/15/06; 11/20/06;  
12/14/06; 1/8/07; 1/28/07; 2/6/07

### **Category Structure:**

- A. Perceived Expectations for Achievement
  - 1. Expectations from Others
  - 2. Desire to Excel (Expectations of Self)
  
- B. Achievement Outcomes
  - 1. Consequences of Pressure and Competition
  - 2. Worth it; Waste it
  
- C. Mechanisms for Achievement
  - 1. Planning Ahead
    - a. Career First
  - 2. Private Education
  - 3. Climbing the Ladder
    - a. Too Risky

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### **A. “Perceived Expectations for Achievement”**

#### **1. Category: “Others’ Expectations for Achievement”**

- 1. MP Interview, Lines 514-517, Coded on 11/1/06  
“I mean I feel like when I choose an occupation my *Perceives parental desire* parents want it to have a certain old school validity, for “*respectability*”  
I mean, they want it to be, in other people’s eyes, a very *Others perceptions matter* respectable career”
  
- 2. MP Interview, Lines 388-401, Coded on 11/1/06  
my parents have always been, there wasn’t ever a question of just getting by, it was...getting an A was, that was what you had to get and if you fell below *Perceives high expectations* that you had to work up to it, so there wasn’t *Work ethic;* really, you know, I appreciate that they made *Parental Influence* the highest attainment possible (sigh), ok, um, the highest bar possible what I had to settle at, *Appreciates high expectation* and because I really thing that that has (cell phone) um, I really feel like my parents by them talking about, like they never brag, my parents are very understated, but by them making evident the *“Hard work and dedication”*

importance of hard work and dedication, I started at an early age, finding out what you want to do, *History of career planning*

3. AIHi Interview, Lines 839-841, Coded on 9/25/06  
“no, they never put pressure on me, they just reward *Does not perceive parental me when I do well, I don’t consider that pressure, they pressure—just rewards* wouldn’t be disappointed if I got a few B’s”
4. MP Interview, Lines 419-424, Coded on 11/1/06  
“I mean, you try to be the best at what you can be, and what I like is that, if you don’t achieve that, my family, they’re not going to be like, oh my gosh, you’re grounded, they’re not like that *Lack of achievement* at all, they try to analyze the problem and see what *needs fixing* you could have done to fix it”
5. MP Interview, Lines 407-408, Coded on 11/1/06  
my family always, they are the best, they try to *Family Culture of Achieving* be the best at what they do, so...
6. AIHi Interview, Lines, 852-853, Coded on 9/28/06  
“yeah, they brag a lot” *Aware of parents pride and “bragging”*
7. AIHi Interview, Lines 811-817, Coded on 9/28/06  
it’s definitely brought on upon by myself, the only *Pressure “brought upon time that I really felt pressure from other people was herself”* around national merit time, Sister M and Mr. P, kind of just because I’ve always been like, if St. Charles ranked I definitely I’d be in the top six or seven and you know, it seemed like they were thinking that I was *Describing others’ expectations* really going to score high and then I didn’t, it hurt...
8. LC Interview, Lines 1166-1182, Coded on 10/25/06  
yeah, I think so, because I do well in school and I’m *Aware of others’ status* one of the top in my grade, so people really do expect *competition among classmates* something from me, especially, actually, people in my grade and they don’t do it, it’s not, like, oh if you do *Percieves high expect. from friends and fam* bad we’re not going to be friends with you, it’s not that, but they expect me to do well and I’m sometimes afraid of disappointing them, like if I do bad they’re going to *fear of disappointing others* be like, oh, you didn’t do well, that’s weird, so...and it’s not a negative thing coming from them, it’s that *Expectations are not negative* they expect me to do well, oh, you always do well, *Positive feedback →* you’re really smart...and so if I don’t, I feel like I’ve *high expectations* let everybody down even though I don’t think anybody’s

really even thinking about it, but I feel like I am, so...and teachers expect me to do well, so I do think there's been some pressure, not intentionally and it's not been negative, it's just that they expect me to do well and if I don't, I feel really bad...

9. RA Interview, Lines 390-392, Coded on 2/19/07  
not really, my grandfather wants me to get a, wants me to be a chemist and finish his PhD, but he's kinda... .. a little bit wacky  
*Expectations from others  
grandfather encouraging  
PhD; discounts expectations*
10. RA Interview, Lines 1071-1072, Coded on 2/19/07  
and then my parents would be disappointed in, if I didn't [make good grades],  
*Parents expectations*
11. CA Interview, Lines 207-209, Coed on 2/25/07  
I guess, I think I seem kind of, I study a lot, and I make pretty good grades so I guess they figure, you know, doctor, so...  
*Expectations—others?  
Friends associate smart with  
future as a doctor*
12. CA Interview, Lines 269-271, Coed on 2/25/07  
they'll ask me what I want to do, they don't, they try really hard not to push me in any direction...  
*Parent expectations*
13. AH Interview, Line 194, Coded on 1/16/07  
Definitely being an engineer. Or a lawyer.  
*Parents*

**2. Category: “Desire to Excel” (Expectations of Self)**

1. MP Interview, Lines 231-234, Coded on 11/1/06  
”I also learned that in the medical field if you really want to be prominent you *Desire to Excel* have to do a lot of research and there was no way I was going to sit in the lab”
2. MP Interview, Lines 284-286, Coded on 11/1/06  
“when I see myself in a career I always envision myself being extremely successful in that career *Desire to excel in chosen occupation* and prominent in the field”
3. CH Interview, Lines 744-746, Coded on 9/18/06  
“I'm not really sure, I guess, yeah, probably, I kind “*probably*” for of see myself doing that, cause I want to try to go *grad work*

as far as I can in my career, so..."

*Desire to "excel"*

4. CH Interview, Lines 775-777, Coded on 9/18/06  
um, I guess [nurse is] kind of along the lines as a doctor,  
but I might want to go further, like go on to be a doctor,  
like if you're a nurse, kind of thinking that you probably  
want to be a doctor, so...  
*Desire to excel; room  
for advancement;  
Prestige*
5. CH Interview, Lines 476-478, Coded on 9/15/06  
I think about it, yeah, kind of, like I'm thinking well, if I  
make these good grades and everything I can get into that  
good college and go on to excel in a career  
*Planning Ahead  
planning for college*
6. MP Interview, Lines 574-578, Coded on 11/15/06  
"I want more recognition for  
what I've done, if I'm not the one who's revered  
for getting the best grades then, when I go to college  
then I want to be someone who really excels and  
people know for that area"  
*Need for recognition  
Recognition yields  
motivation  
Desire to Excel*
7. MP Interview, Lines 689-695, Coded on 11/15/06  
cause I could say even when I was in  
elementary school, I'd write Harvard and Yale  
*young age*  
on my binders and I wanted to go there and I  
always wanted to be the best at what I do, by  
*Expectations of Self  
Traces ambition to  
Excelling  
Being the "best"*
8. MP Interview, Lines 791-793, Coded on 11/15/06  
yeah, like would I want to become a teacher, well  
I'll be a professor, but I wouldn't be a high school  
teacher, no, something like that...  
*Desire to excel within  
occupation*
9. MP Interview, Lines 802-808, Coded on 11/15/06  
because it's not, the doctor is superior to the  
nurse, and I mean, it's...you know, assume that  
a women, oh, you'll become a nurse, like the  
women who can't become doctors become nurses  
and that's every time, that idea has been introduced  
in any type of situation, no, I reject that, I want to  
be the best, so...  
*Desires the "superior"  
occupation  
Desire to stand out  
Desire to excel; to be  
"The best"*
10. MP Interview, Lines 823-827, Coded on 11/15/06  
no, when I went to elementary school, we were  
running for student, I would be president and like  
*History of desire to excel*

when we went to page school, I didn't want to be vice-president, I wanted to be president, you know, *Desire to stand out, to be "the best"*

11. MP Interview, Lines 832-835, Coded on 11/15/06  
 I don't know where it's really come from, *Desire to excel*  
 honestly, I mean, I think I was born with it, *Desire to stand out*  
 this determination, I didn't want to join a club,  
 I wanted to start a club...
  
12. MP Interview, Lines 855-861, Coded on 11/15/06  
 I'm pressured more so by myself than anyone *Self-Pressure*  
 else, I mean, everyone's like we're not trying to *Pressure comes from self*  
 pressure you and most people are like, oh my *Friends have parental*  
 mom's telling me this and it's like, no, I mean, *pressure*  
 not achieving the goals I've set for myself is b *Expectations of Self*  
 igger than not achieving the goals my parents *Parents set goals for her*  
 have set for myself,
  
13. JP Interview, Lines 403-410, Coded on 11/27/06  
 "I don't know, I *Enjoyment vs. Advancement*  
 struggle with teaching, cause I would love *Struggling with decision*  
 to teach and I love kids, but it's kind of like, you  
 know, well *Considering enjoyment*  
 once you're teaching, well unless you want to go to *Fear of being Stuck*  
 college, there's no really progression there, you have *Desire to excel*  
 to really be content with that, and which, I think I *Room for advancement*  
 could be, but it's kind of...you have to consider *Struggling with being*  
 that, so..." *content with no progression*
  
14. MD Interview, Lines 1036-1039, Coded on 12/11/06  
 hmmm, it would depend...secretary, for like  
 Donald Trump or secretary for like my dad's *Depends on prestige level*  
 company, or something, like it would *Desire to excel*  
 definitely depends
  
15. AH Interview, Lines 893-894, Coded on 1/16/07  
 don't know; I'd want to be the lawyer, *Desire to excel*  
 not the paralegal.
  
16. RA Interview, Lines 919-920, Coded on 2/19/07  
 um, yeah, but if I was going to be in the *Desire to Excel*  
 medical field, I would just go for a doctor
  
17. RA Interview, Lines 1066-1071, Coded on 2/19/07  
 well you know, I always feel like I need to

- succeed academically, because I always have in the past, I make A's at St. Charles, um, fairly easily, so I always feel like I need to keep that up...um, that's probably the only thing I really stress about
- Desire to Excel*  
*expectations based on past achievement*
18. SD Interview, Lines 617-619, Coded on 1/23/07  
I want to have a job where I have a higher position, er, I don't know...
- Desire for a career that "higher"*
19. CA Interview, Lines 226-227, Coded on 2/25/07  
yeah, I think so, I'm pretty, I'm a perfectionist I would say...
- Perfectionistic;*  
*Desire to Excel*
20. CA Interview, Lines 621-624, Coded on 2/25/07  
um, maybe, yeah, it depends on what kind of stuff I would be doing, but...I guess I'm kind of hoping I might be in a position higher than secretary...
- Desire to Excel*  
*Wants a "higher" position*
21. CA Interview, Lines 731-737, Coded on 2/25/07  
well, like I said, I'm kind of a perfectionist, so, you know, I've gotta get the grades and then after you get the grades you have to get into the right college and then get into the right program for a career and so, it's just a lot of pressure because you're really jumping into what you're going to be doing in the future, so...
- Desire to excel*  
*Expectations of Self*  
*Planning ahead*  
*pressure based on planning*

Appendix 11:  
Sample Memos

Sample “Procedural” Memo:

**6. Memo Writer:** Anne

**Memo Date:** November 20, 2006

**Memo Type:** Procedural

**Memo regarding Meeting on:** November 17, 2006

I felt okay about the meeting this time—I prepared a little handout on SCW to give the team that had some stimulus questions and guidelines for the axial coding process. This is all so new to me that it’s hard to know what will work well, and what won’t. I actually thought this was a good process, though. It gave us a little more structure than just free-form discussion, but also wasn’t restrictive. We still wandered, of course, but once we started working we kept on task pretty well this time...not as much chatting once we got going. I thought the feel of this discussion was different in that the team is really starting to hypothesize what are the most important...it felt like we were moving farther away from a model or connection between sub-categories. But at the same time I think maybe we’re getting closer to forming an understanding of how SCW permeates so many other categories. At any rate, I think the meeting format was good...I think it helps when I do some work on the front-end in terms of creating diagrams, writing pointed questions, and reminding them of previous conversations. That way we don’t lose momentum. As long as I keep refreshing myself on what the PARTICIPANTS think are the underlying and important mechanisms, I don’t feel I’m doing too much of the work. I also think it’s important to continue double-checking with them to make sure I’m representing their work and thoughts accurately.

One concern I’m having is that we need to MAKE SURE we’re grounded in the data. One thing I’d like to do is go back to the CL and look at the concepts out to the side of each category and really make sure we’re capturing something that is the REALITY of these girls. I believe the team has it very clear that this is our purpose, and is quick to point it out when someone makes a leap. Kristen, for example, is good at saying, “I think you’re right, but we just don’t know yet.” I want to make sure I’m playing that role as well, which I did in the last meeting. One place I think we REALLY need to be careful about this is when we talk about “Parental Messages” about social class. In terms of the data, there’s actually not that much there yet...it’s easy to assume the girls are gathering their beliefs from their parents and family culture, but I think we need to be more careful about making these assumptions.

I’m starting to see the point of Kathy Charmaz who suggests that axial coding can get the novice researcher bogged down in terminology and trying to find “properties” and “dimensions”. I find those labels useful to an extent, but the way our team works just doesn’t seem to lend itself to that structured an analysis. We are, however, looking for sub-categories and relating those sub-categories to the larger category and asking ourselves Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. I think it is helpful to think about phenomena and consequences, and to work on how to create a complex and nuanced web of interactions that describe what is going on for these girls. Thus I

don't feel that I use the EXACT process of axial coding as Strauss and Corbin describe it, but I do feel that I'm using principles of axial coding in order to answer questions, dig deeper into the data, and use constant comparison.

Sample "Categorical" Memo:

**1. Memo Writer:** Anne

**Memo Type:** Categorical

**Title:** "Shared Perceptions and Beliefs About Achievement"

12/14/06:

This is the name the team developed to describe different "rules" or systems of belief that were common to the girls, and that dealt with class or occupational prestige.

1/8/07:

At the 1/8 meeting, the team was unanimous that social beliefs and norms should be its own category, rather than a sub-category within SCW. The rationale for this was that the norms and beliefs listed were varied in the degree to which they seemed a definite by-product of SCW. I still feel like some of the sub-categories within this category are very much a part of SCW, but I also feel the team's judgment makes sense as well. This seems to be one example of when (as the qual literature suggests), categories can go in more than one place.

2/6/07:

In further examining this major group of categories, the team decided that actually—the content was more descriptive of the norms relating to *Achievement* rather than *Social Class*. Thus, "Humility" was omitted from this group of categories, and the overall group was given a new title that reflects the heavy emphasis on Achievement.

Sample "Conceptual" Memo:

**33. Memo Writer:** Anne/Kim/Team

**Memo Date:** December 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**Memo Type:** Conceptual

**Memo regarding Meeting on:** --

**Title:** "Observations Yield Values?"

I began a very rough version of this memo by myself on the 8<sup>th</sup>, had sort of forgotten about it, and then the team (particularly Kim) articulated the ideas I was trying to convey. Or at least my original idea addressed one piece of this phenomenon, and Kim extended it. So here goes:

I was envisioning another system model that looks at the connection between observations of parents careers (father influence) along with direct messages from parents and others to create → values! This makes sense, no matter what the individual girl's values are. For example, with Jane--her parents use messages (both

overt and subtle), as does the school for that matter, in order to develop in her a belief that she should do service and give charity.

The follow-up piece to this (from Kim) is that based on these values, the girls are locked into very prestigious occupations, or at least occupations with high earning potential. For example, Jane wants to make enough money so that she can give money to charity. And her sources of comparison in this area are REALLY wealthy examples...so she would have to pursue an occupation with a high salary in order to fulfill this goal. Likewise, Meredith wants to be able to travel. And the places she's traveled thus far in her life suggest that by "traveling", she means traveling to very far-away locations. So again, in order to afford traveling of this kind, she would need an occupation with a high salary. Occupations with high salaries tend to go hand-in-hand with prestige level, so it seems that salary and prestige are byproducts of the values that these girls hold. I should be aware, though, that there are some values listed that don't necessarily require money...enjoyment is one, and interest-level is one. HOWEVER, the jobs that the girls associate with "boring"...are these also the lower-SES jobs?

This needs a diagram! I need to create a diagram in excel for this phenomenon.

Appendix 12:  
Demographics and Descriptive Information

**Demographic and Descriptive Data:**

**# who attended private elementary school? 6**

**# who attended private middle school? 9**

**Mothers' Education Level (highest level attained):**

High school only:	0
Partial College:	1
College:	8
Masters:	1
PhD:	1

**Fathers' Education Level (highest level attained):**

High school only:	1
Partial College:	0
College:	8
JD:	1
CPA:	1

**Social Class Identifications (self-identified by participants):**

Working Class:	0
Middle Class:	4
Upper Middle Class:	3
Lower Upper Class:	1
Upper Class:	1

**Average Age of Parents when Married: 30**

Table 1.

*Family Occupations reported (number of reported family members in each occupation)*

<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>Mother</u></b>	<b><u>Father</u></b>	<b><u>Grandparent</u></b>	<b><u>Other</u></b>
Attorney		1		3
Physician				
CPA		1		
Teacher	1		3	5
Sales	1			1
Oil/Gas		4	1	2
Business Owner (not oil/gas)	1	1	3	3
Banking/Finance	1	1		
Bookkeeper	1			
Air Traffic Controller		1		
Homemaker	4		4	5
Architect			1	
Speech Pathologist				1
Agriculture/Farming			2	1
Volunteers	1			
Government				3
Military				
Secretary				2
Musician				1
Electrician				2
Construction/Building			1	
Journalism/Communications			1	1
Stock Broker				2
Olympic Athlete Coach				1
Business, General		2	1	2
Computer Programming				1
Nursing				3
College Professor			2	2
Politics				1
Advertising				1
Respiratory Therapist		1		
Physician's Assistant	1			
Medical Technician				1
Librarian				1
Real Estate				1
Chemist	1		1	
Fly-fishing instructor				1
Veterinarian				2

Table 2.

*Occupations Considered/Pursued and College Majors Considered/Pursued*

<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b>#</b>	<b><u>College Major</u></b>	<b>#</b>
<b>Physician</b>	2	<b>Chemistry</b>	1
<b>Attorney</b>	1	<b>Physics</b>	1
<b>Journalism/Communications</b>	1	<b>Biology</b>	
<b>Musician/Actress/Artist</b>	1	<b>Psychology</b>	1
<b>Psychologist/Counseling</b>	2	<b>Sociology</b>	1
<b>Accountant</b>	1		
<b>Business (General)</b>	3	<b>Business</b>	2
<b>International Business</b>	2	<b>International Business/Econ</b>	1
<b>Business Finance</b>	1		
<b>Computers</b>	1	<b>Foreign Language</b>	1
<b>Politics</b>	1	<b>International Relations</b>	1
<b>Teaching</b>	3	<b>Pre-law</b>	1
<b>Advertising</b>	2	<b>Classics</b>	1
<b>Pilot</b>	1	<b>English</b>	
<b>Coast Guard</b>	1	<b>Music</b>	
<b>Politics</b>	1		
<b>Theater</b>	1		
<b>Engineer</b>	1		
<b>Psychiatry</b>	1		
<b>Marketing</b>	1		
<b>Nutritionist</b>	1		
<b>Fasion</b>	2		
<b>Veterinarian</b>	1		

(Number anticipating a double major: 2)

Table 3.

*Occupations—Would you Consider? (See Interview Protocol)*

<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>	<b><u>Maybe</u></b>
Librarian	2	6	
Physician	3	1	3
Attorney	1	4	3
Medical Technician	2	4	1
Nurse	2	6	1
Paralegal		4	4
Banker	3	1	
Accountant	4	2	
Artist/Musician	3	2	2
Homemaker	3	2	3
Secretary		3	2
Real Estate	3		
College Professor	3	4	2
Teacher	4	3	
Forest Ranger		2	

NOTE: I did not ask all girls about all occupations.

Table 4.

*Where will you be in 10 years?*

<b><u>Things Mentioned</u></b>	<b><u># Times Mentioned</u></b>
Living in another country	2
Married	0
In a Relationship	1
In School	1
Working	4
Living in a Large City	2
Engaged	1
Living in Another State	2
Single	2

Table 5.

*Colleges Mentioned as Possibilities/Options*

<u>School</u>	<u>Number of Times Mentioned</u>
Harvard	2
Notre Dame	1
Dartmouth	1
University of Oklahoma	2
Washington University-St. Louis	3
Tulane	1
Davidson	1
Gonzaga	1
Columbia	1
Brown	1
NYU	2
Princeton	1
University of Chicago	1
Texas Christian University	2
Villanova	1
US Coast Guard Academy	1
Air Force Academy	1
Yale	1
UC-Boulder	1
Colorado State University	1
Oklahoma State University	1
Brigham Young University	1
Rice University	1
Boston University	1
Vanderbilt	2
Emory	1
Duke	1
Trinity	1

## VITA

Anne B. Scott is originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she was born January 13, 1980. She is the younger of two daughters of Jeffrey A. and Jan B. Scott. She attended public elementary school in Tulsa, and then attended Cascia Hall Preparatory School for both Middle School and High School. She received her B.A. in Psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and continued her masters and doctoral work at MU in the Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology under the mentorship of Mary J. Heppner, Ph.D. Anne's research interests include career development, particularly the contextual and demographic variables that affect career development, as well as the broader study of gender, media, and adolescent women.

Anne will complete her Pre-doctoral Internship at the Duke University Counseling Center beginning August, 2007. She expects to graduate with her doctorate in spring of 2008, and will pursue a career that incorporates her love of writing, teaching, and clinical practice with college students.