"My Life Is *So* Not Interesting"

Identity Development of Adolescent Minority Girls at an Urban High School

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the identity development of young women in the context of an urban high school in the Southwest. All of the participants were academically successful and on-track to graduate from high school, ostensibly ready for "college, career and life." Life story interviews were co-constructed with the teacher-researcher. These accounts were recorded, transcribed and coded for themes related to identity development. The narrative interviews were treated as historical accounts of identity development and, simultaneously, as performances of identity in the figured world of the urban high school. The interviews reflected the participants' ability to create a coherent life story modulated to the context of the interview. Generally, they used the interviews as an opportunity to test ideas about their identity, or to perform an ideal self. Several key findings emerged. First, while content and focus of the interviews varied widely, there was a common formulation of success among the participants akin to the traditional "American Dream." Second, the participants, although sharing key long term goals, had a diverse repertoire of strategies to achieve their goals. Last, schooling, both informal and formal, played different roles in supporting the women during this transition from childhood to adulthood. Results indicate that multiple pathways exist for students to find success in US high schools, and that the "college for all" narrative may limit educators' ability to support students as they create their own narratives of successful lives.

Dedicated to Bill, Randy and Noah.

Oh, life not worth a yam 'til me can say, hey!

Me am what me am!

Cookie Monster

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> Human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention. (D. Holland, Skinner, Cain, & Lachicotte, 1998, p. 5)

Preparing Students for College, Career and Life

At the heart of this dissertation are the six strong and determined young women that I had the privilege of working with. This dissertation is a study of their identity development, as experienced in an urban high school in 2013. Each of these young women faced unique personal challenges in their adolescent transition from "child" to "adult." Each of these women had a personal vision of what a successful future might look like, and how they could reach those goals. However, like Elizabeth whose life was "*so* not interesting," the participants often voiced doubts that their life stories were anything besides mundane.

It is easy to feel insignificant in this, the beginning of the twenty-first century. With billions of humans, it is invariably someone else who is making news or being recognized. Even within a smaller community—say, an urban high school with a student body of approximately 1500 students—it is a select few who are recognized as the "best" in what they do, whether it is academics, sports, or some sort of extracurricular. In this highly competitive environment, being "unique" is in itself a challenge, and personal resources might be better spent toward more attainable goals.

However, it is because of the uniqueness of individuals that the arc of history eventually changes. In the words of Margaret Mead (as emblazoned on a popular

classroom poster): "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." From a social practice theory framework, individuals are not solely products of their sociocultural context, but neither are sociocultural contexts immune from the influence of individuals. What Elizabeth and the other participants *do*, on a daily basis, is a complex mixture of reproducing their world and altering it. By examining how the participants in this study are able to be successful within the figured world of urban education, we can better recognize the ways that schools currently support and constrain all students.

This study begins with the premise that individuals, engaged in their own local practices and struggles for autonomy, eventually affect the world in which they participate. This study is a first step toward a better understanding of how these teenagers define themselves, the strategies they employ to do so, and how these identity decisions might shape both opportunity and future success. Remaking the world, however, is ultimately a collective endeavor in which we are all involved. Understanding these mechanisms of identity development among traditionally disadvantaged students will, ultimately, assist educators in their efforts to improve schools and prepare *all* students for "college, career, and life."[1]

Purpose: Understanding What Works

> I never knew this until now, but that's what they said. My mom and him. So I guess that's part of the first chapter. –Marie

[1] A phrase that became common educational parlance after it was popularized by Bill and Melinda Gates in 2007-8 (B. Gates, 2008a, 2008b; M. F. Gates, 2007).

Often our own experiences are trumped by what other people tell us. Like Marie, the chapters of our "book of life" can be rewritten by others with just a few words. Public education, on the other hand, tends to move along slowly, resistant to individual circumstances and social change. Seemingly intractable, we have ceased to question what the purpose of schooling is and how it works for today's population. By asking questions, we may find that our narrative for public education needs to be revised, updated for the twenty-first century.

The central argument of this dissertation is three-fold. First, U.S. schools, despite considerable money and political effort, still leave many children "behind" (Gay, 2007; Hursh, 2007) Those left behind reflect the historical inequities in our country based on gender, sex, ethnicity, race, economic status and cultural identity (Buttaro & Battle, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Second, there are students from this "disadvantaged" group that are successful within U.S. schools, and it would be profitable to examine how they achieve this (Bettie, 2002; Castro, 2013; Dinovitzer, Hagan, & Parker, 2003). In the past, successful minority students are offered as "proof" of the adequacy of the current system. Instead—the final piece of this argument—we can examine the paths to success that these students have forged and look to how schools can be re-made for a more equitable future (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; Lareau, 2015; Phillips, 2013).

Current model of American education. The United States has long espoused the existence of the American Dream, in which success is attainable by anyone willing to work for it. The current system for education in the United States is deeply rooted in this history, and it is particularly rife with themes of independence and hard work (Beach,

2007; Greene, 1973, 2000; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Assuming on one hand that success is possible through hard work, and on the other hand that college is the key to a successful future, the K-12 public education system has narrowed its focus to a set of supposed skills and competencies that will make students "college and career ready" (CCSSI, 2015). Broad academic achievement, then, becomes the central goal for every student (Figure 1).

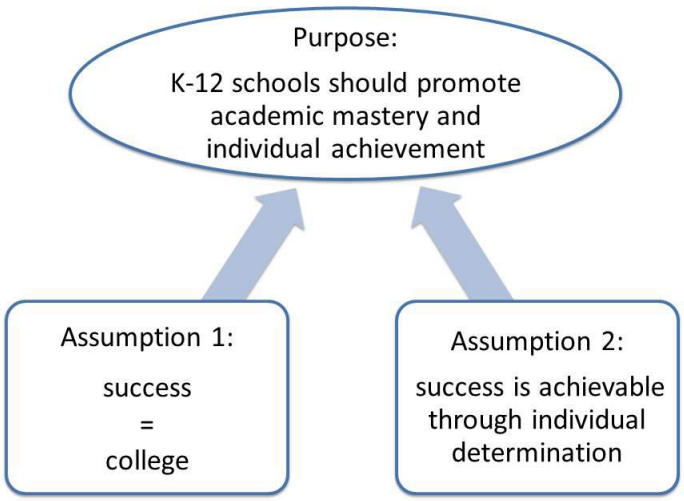


Figure 1. Current model of K-12 education

Historical inequities, from a meritocratic view, should not exist, because everyone has the capacity to overcome disadvantages due to socioeconomic class. This belief has important implications in the education system in the United States because it runs counter to the many attempts to address historical inequities between the "advantaged" and the "disadvantaged." One such intervention is a popular program called "Advancement Via Individual Determination" (AVID). The idea, as the name suggests, is that by teaching appropriate study skills and proper comportment, students

will "rise to the challenge" and achieve academic success (AVID, 2014). These types of college readiness programs abound in U.S. high schools, and it appears that students have every opportunity to be successful—including assistance in finding scholarships—if only they are determined enough.

However, while some reports show increasing opportunities for women and a narrowing of the achievement gap between white and minority students, there are many other indications that gender and racial inequities are growing in size (Carnevale & Strohl, 2011; Robelen, 2012). These inequities persist despite decades of educational efforts—and individual determination on the part of students—to ameliorate them (Buttaro & Battle, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Moving beyond statistics and demographics. The current model for U.S. education has resulted in the "bucket system" of the No Child Left Behind era that mandates minimum student achievement for students who officially fall into one racial category or ability level (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Because of persistent achievement gaps between different demographic groups, there has been a tendency in education to define populations of interest on a surface level, prioritizing societal markers like race, citizenship status, economic status, ability and gender (Bettie, 2002; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Nasir & Hand, 2006). These societal markers—though important to identity, and certainly recognized and discussed among adolescent peer groups—are not necessarily how urban adolescents want to be—or should be—defined (Spencer, 2008). Urban adolescents tend to be further defined by "risk factors," like teen motherhood, drug use, and other problem-centered labels (Foti, Balaji, & Shanklin, 2011; Reyes & Elias,

2011; Sussman, Jones, Wilson, & Kann, 2002). These labels are helpful in making generalizations, but make it difficult to see students in new ways.

As educators we need to question the current model of education and refocus our perspective on the students we are supposed to serve: young people themselves (Crippen, 2004; Greenleaf & Spears, 2002; Nichols, 2010). Little is known about the content and diversity of narratives that teenagers create to define themselves when they are not burdened with these particular lenses imposed from without. Because identity is multifaceted, these narratives flex and change depending on the context and potential audience (Bamberg, 2011b; Hermans, 2001; Morton, 2014). These narratives, however, also offer rich evidence regarding the process of individual identity production, and how this is translated into real-world action with real-world consequences (Bamberg, 2011a; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Narrative research offers the possibility of moving beyond a generic "work hard, stay out of trouble" formula for advancement (K. F. Jackson, Wolven, & Aguilera, 2013).

What experiences of family, school and society do our young people bring with them? What values, practices, and hopes for the future do they have? What do they want and need from their education—and what do they get? What are the competing narratives from their families, their schools, and their communities about "who they are," and how do students reconcile them while trying to establish their self-ascribed identity and path in life? These types of questions need to be asked—and answered—if we are to create a model of education that serves all students. In fact, these very questions can become the basis of a new model for education in the United States (Figure 2). By

shifting the school model to one that is student-centered, schools will be better able to adapt to a changing society, with changing needs.

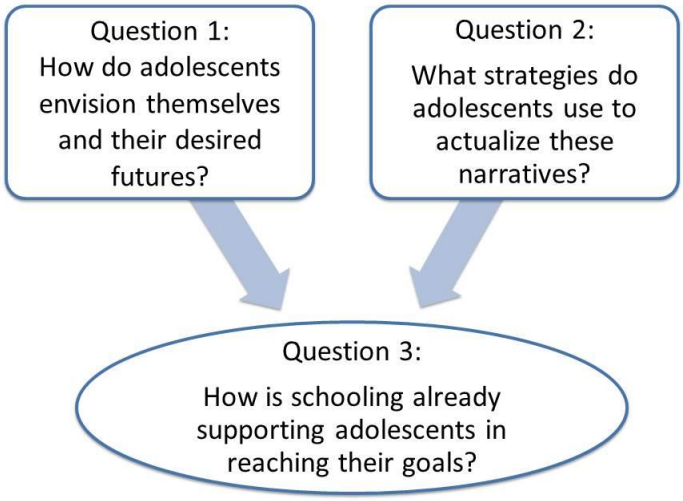


Figure 2. Proposed model of K-12 education

Reimagining schools. Young people are taught that success is attainable by following one particular path: study hard, go to college, earn a degree, and get a job. This plan echoes the Horatio Alger stories of long ago, where success is achievable by all, only if you try hard enough (Glass & Nygreen, 2011; Rosenbaum, 2011). The problem occurs when young people adopt the "work hard" philosophy, but do not "succeed" (M. M. Holland, 2015). If success is achievable by all, failure indicates that the individual is to blame (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015).

Schooling in the United States is at a sort of crossroads. The education community can continue on, much as we have been, adopting programs designed to achieve whatever vision of success is currently espoused by policymakers and politicians. However, if public education is to adapt for the needs of today's youth, schooling in the

United States must reimagine both itself and the future. It is imperative that schools move away from prescriptions for all, and look instead at recognizing and affirming the individual.

By closely listening to *what* these young women have to say and *how* it is said, we will uncover valuable insight into each of their particular developmental pathways. Specifically, this study examines three fundamental questions:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

The purpose of this study is to identify the specific strategies that a small group of adolescents employed to establish their preferred identities within their communities. These women were all considered successful in their high school community, and therefore can offer examples of "what works" in similar contexts. Particular attention will be given to spaces for learning, growth and development at school outside of the formal curriculum. This study will show that the strategies these young women employed are far more nuanced than the traditional prescriptions for success generally advocated in schools. Understanding this aspect of identity development can better inform educators and community leaders who are choosing how best to allocate limited school resources.

Study Description: I Want to Talk About Me!

The young women participating in this story were asked to represent themselves—who they were, where they were going, and what they wanted—in a narrative largely of their own design. The six participants in this study were all students at a Central Arizonan urban high school called City High.[2] There were many opportunities for student involvement in clubs and sports at City High. In particular, all of these young women had participated in a lunch time Scrapbooking Club during the 2012-2013 school year. I was a co-sponsor of the club, and the participants were familiar with me from that role (see Appendix A).

During the interviews with these six women, they were asked to tell a "life story." These stories sometimes complemented their projects in the Scrapbooking Club (e.g. six word memoirs, "When I was born," "I want to talk about me!"). However, the narrative purpose the participants adopted within the interviews was ultimately much different than their motivation for scrapbooking projects. The narrative purpose, or motivation, behind each of their life stories emerged as an important commonality among the participants.

This study employs a narrative approach to the study of identity development. Storytelling provides information on multiple levels: as an account of events, an interpretation of events, an expression of personal identity, and an interaction between storyteller and listener (D. J. Clandinin, 2006; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008). By examining each level, a consistent master story should emerge for each storyteller. It is these master stories that will provide insight into individual strategies for success.

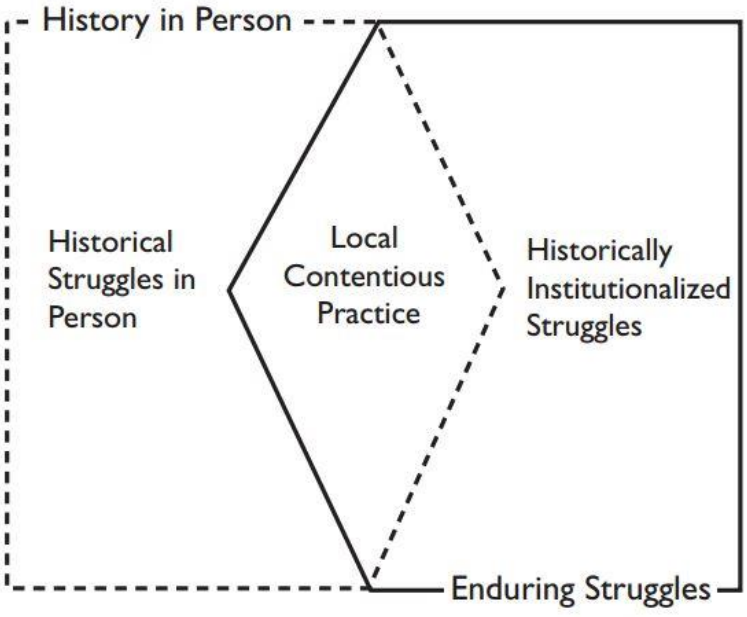
[2] The name of the high school, as well as all of the participant's names, have been changed to protect their privacy.

After the interviews with the participants, each life narrative was transcribed. Individual stories were identified and used as the unit of analysis. To address the first research question regarding the content of the narratives, as well as the second research question regarding strategies of identity negotiation, a grounded coding scheme was generated through the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, to address the third research question concerning the role of school, pertinent stories were grouped by whether they involved the formal curriculum or the informal curriculum of school. These stories were specifically evaluated to identify the type of opportunity that school provided to the participant (or failed to provide). Finally, the data *in toto* was used, along with purposeful re-readings of the interview transcripts and field notes, to create case studies that addressed specific thematic aspects of each narrative.

Interpretative Framework: Historical Forces and Individual Agency

Because this study sought to privilege effective strategies that the participants used, rather than deficits or roadblocks, an interpretive theoretical framework was needed that emphasized personal agency over societal constraints. Consequently, I adopted Holland et. al.'s articulation of a "social practice theory of identity" (D. Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; D. Holland & Lave, 2001a). This framework describes how enduring struggles of human history are entwined with individual agency, ultimately producing and remaking the "figured worlds" in which all people participate. Figured worlds provide a context for their members to interact with cultural artifacts and respond to the behavior of other people. Through this participation individuals advance their personal understanding of self.

The social practice theory that Holland and Lave developed in the their edited collection of essays, *History in Person: Enduring Struggles, Contentious Practice, Intimate Identities*, has provided a framework and structure with which adolescent identity development can be analyzed. In this seminal work, Holland and Lave provide a visual representation of how history, individual agency, identity, figured worlds and local practice all relate to each other (D. Holland & Lave, 2001a). The complex interchange between individuals and the historical arc of human society can be conceptualized as two separate, but overlapping, constructs (Figure 3). These constructs—"history in person"[3] and "enduring struggles"— interact through human action to create what Holland and Lave refer to as "local contentious practice."



[3] Holland and Lave (2001) refer alternately to "intimate identities," as in the title, and "history in person."

Figure 3. History in practice: the relations between history in person and enduring struggles (D. Holland and Lave, 2001, pg.7)

This framework, and its helpful visual representation, also provide a means of navigating this dissertation as a whole. The literature review in chapter two is like the right side of the figure, "enduring struggles." Within the literature review I will first examine the ways adolescent identity has been conceptualized in this country, which is integral to the development of public schooling in the United States, and ultimately our understanding of what constitutes "successful" for today's youth. This is a large part of the "historically institutionalized struggles" that form the basis of the figured world of urban high schools. The second part of the literature review highlights specific, relevant work in this figured world of urban high schools, which provide the context of this study.

The left side of Holland and Lave's figure represents the construct "history in person." This consists of the individual, agentive people that make up human society, and their lifetime of experiences, thoughts and feelings (Figure 3). Chapter three and chapter four together correspond to this side of the HIP diagram. Chapter three, the methodology of this study, describes (generally) the agentive people who participated in this study, and the context in which the data was collected. General characteristics, like participant demographics, offer a first glimpse into the lives of the participants. Chapter four presents a more complete description of the participants as a series of case studies.

Again, the place where "enduring struggles" and "intimate identities" (i.e. history in person) overlap is the heart of Holland and Lave's framework, and the heart of everyday life:

> Local practice comes about in the encounters between people as they address and respond to each other while enacting cultural activities under conditions of political-economic and cultural-historical conjuncture. (D. Holland & Lave, 2009, p. 3)

Holland and Lave call this overlap "local contentious practice," and locate it as occurring in the "figured worlds" that we all participate in. I envision "local contentious practice" to correspond with the three analyses chapters, in which I identify common themes (chapter 5), describe strategies (chapter 6), and localize my findings within the figured world of urban schooling (chapter 7). These chapters address the original research questions by summarizing and interpreting the results of the data analysis.

Finally, chapter 8 provides a conclusion of sorts, in which I reunite the "historically institutionalized struggles" and the "historical struggles in person" in order to theorize how the two in combination might re-author the figured world of urban high schools.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Enduring Struggles

The creation of "adolescence," public schooling, and the idea of the "American Dream" all converge into a familiar place regulated by bell schedules and room assignments, student handbooks and classroom rules: high school. In this figured world societal issues at large, like immigration, race, gender, sex and financial status, are reproduced on a smaller scale. The participants—teachers, students, administrators, and the catch-all "staff"—struggle for the power of self-definition; adolescents in particular must define "who they are" amid iconic character roles like good girls, undocumented minors, troubled teenagers and future professionals. In order to understand the identity development of any one of these individuals, it is necessary to understand the historical backdrop in which they live.

This literature review will first delineate the leading conceptualizations of identity, particularly for adolescents ("Adolescent Identity Struggles"). These, necessarily, are only a small representation of a history of the ideas that culminate in today's understanding of identity, and ultimately what it means to be successful in this country. These conceptualizations are tempered by specific theories regarding identity development based on different demographic characteristics, ("Identity and Intersectionality").

I will then describe more current work regarding identity and schooling in contexts similar to this study ("The Figured World of Urban High Schools"). This leads to a rationale for the study of identity within educational contexts ("Educational

Contexts: Why Identity Matters"). Finally, I describe how this study will add to the ongoing dialogue concerning how we might improve U.S. schools for diverse individuals ("Relevance of the Current Study").

Adolescent Identity Struggles

Adolescence is a socially constructed period of time in the lifespan that is found in many cultures worldwide (Galland, 2001; Lesko, 2012). Often viewed as a "bridge" from childhood to adulthood, adolescence is considered a formative period for individual identity (Dahl, 2004; Erikson, 1968; Hall, 1904). It generally begins at the onset of puberty, and ends whenever children are afforded the rights and responsibilities of adults, according to their respective societies (Galland, 2001).

"Identity," on the other hand, represents a vast field of thought in the social sciences and philosophy (Crocetti, Sica, Schwartz, Serafini, & Meeus, 2013). It is through identity that we as humans are able to find sameness with others, and differentness (Adams & Marshall, 1996). Commonly recognizable trajectories allow individuals to connect their experiences with those of others, find coherence in their lives, and guide future actions (Wenger, 1999). Identity is also a way for individuals to position themselves in particular ways in different contexts; this effects how they are viewed, how they are treated, and the opportunities available to them (Gee, 2000; D. Holland et al., 1998)

There are an unending number of ways to define identity, and equally endless ways to analyze it; here I focus on two main conceptualizations, the traditional view and the sociocultural view. The traditional understanding views identity as a linear journey, where the individual becomes increasingly complex, mature, wise and knowledgeable

(Erikson, 1964; Marcia, 2002; Piaget, 1972). A sociocultural understanding of identity positions individuals in a particular time and place, with a multiplicity of identities that are in constant formation and reformation (Hermans, 2001; D. Holland et al., 1998; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). While the sociocultural view of identity is more comprehensive and nuanced, it is important to consider the tradition linear view that is currently engrained in our culture (Lesko, 2012; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

Identity as a linear progression. Identity, and the human struggle to "discover" our identities and define them for other people, can be viewed as a journey from birth to death. From a psychological perspective, this journey can involve physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial development; furthermore, this journey can be scrutinized in systematic ways to produce general scientific theories describing human development. Understanding the ways that human beings grow and develop allows society, theoretically, to optimize the environment for maximal growth (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Through distinguishing between "normal" and "deviant" development, society can consciously interrupt certain trajectories to promote more normal (desirable) development (Baumrind, 1993)—or, in failing that, marginalize those who are considered different (McDermott & Varenne, 1995).

Discussions of lifespan development theory usually begin (and often end) with the work of Erik Erikson. Erikson's psychosocial theory views identity as the central work of human development throughout the lifespan. In adolescence, however, identity work is of paramount importance, and can influence the trajectory of one's life:

> "In their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, which must now include sexual maturity, some adolescents have to come to grips again with crises

> of earlier years before they can install lasting idols and ideals as guardians of a final identity." (Erikson, 1968, p. 128)

To assist in this process, Erikson advocated a "moratorium" period during adolescence whereby an individual could explore different pathways before committing to a "final identity."[4] Unsuccessful resolution of the "identity versus role confusion" stage would reemerge in later life stages, and prevent an individual from developing truly satisfying love relationships, families, and meaningful employment. In essence, an individual cannot reach their full potential—cannot complete their identity journey successfully—without resolving the conflict between identity and role confusion, either in adolescence (when appropriate) or later in life.

James Marcia (2002) further extended the possible developmental pathways during Erikson's period of identity exploration and commitment to incorporate four identity statuses: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusion. Identity achievement occurs when an individual both explores their identity, and commits to an identity. Moratorium is the period of exploration without commitment, while foreclosure is commitment without exploration. Finally, identity diffusion—the most undesirable outcome—is when an individual fails to explore and fails to commit to an identity (Marcia, 2002). Marcia's taxonomy of identity has important practical implications: identity becomes a measureable entity that varies on two continuums, exploration and commitment. A hierarchy is created, within which some people are

[4] It is important to note that Erikson did not suggest that identity was fixed at this point, or immutable to social and historical forces. For perspectives on how Erikson's formulation of identity development has been misinterpreted or not fully realized, see Cote and Levine's (1988) "A critical examination of the ego identity status paradigm" and Penuel and Wertsch's (1995) "Vygotsky and identity formation: A sociocultural approach."

judged as not fully formed, whereas others are considered to be on the "right" path. This reinforces the idea of identity development as a linear path, progressing toward some predetermined end.

Though "identity achievement" is a limited and perhaps dated concept in our digital culture, it has been incorporated into our day-to-day thinking and is still prevalent in educational psychology research (Meeus, 2011). For instance, there has been speculation on whether social media and the internet offer adolescents a healthy, safe place for identity exploration (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Kafai, Fields, & Cook, 2010; Knutzen, Knutzen, & David, 2012), or a dangerous place where a confusion of multiple selves might lead to identity diffusion (Davis, 2013; D. Williams, Kennedy, & Moore, 2011). One of these legacies of Erikson's and Marcia's work is a commonly held cultural belief that each individual has one "true" identity that can be achieved by exploration. This identity is then maintained through some sort of commitment process that gives unity and coherence to each life's trajectory. Culturally, we have created a fairly specific "finding one's self" narrative that prescribes particular patterns of self-questioning and experience-seeking. Images of white, college-age individuals on backpacking treks in foreign lands come to mind, and suggest to me this exploration process is a hidden cultural norm that favors certain groups of people over others.

Identity as a sociohistorical/cultural construct. Indeed, the premise of one single identity waiting to be discovered, as Erikson and Marcia suggest, has been questioned on many levels (Cote & Levine, 1988). Instead, "identity" might be described as a set of preferred strategies that individuals use to interpret the world and guide future actions (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Through different internal and external

experiences, some strategies are adapted, new strategies are developed, and other strategies are discarded. From Wenger's *communities of practice* and social learning systems perspective, identity operates in three different modes: engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 1999). These modes can be thought of as strategies that bridge physical action, internal thought, and relationships to others. However we try to categorize the precise mechanisms of what we refer to as "identity," it is most broadly a continuous process taking place throughout the lifecycle. Identity is not some "thing" to be achieved; identity is what all individuals are already engaged in.

The increased diversity and interconnectedness of the twenty-first century forces all individuals to be border crossers, continually weaving in and out of biological, cultural, intellectual and political borderlands[5]. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco describe the complexities of identity development in the modern era for young people:

> The Eriksonian theory of continuity and sameness in identity-making needs to be updated to effectively engage the complexities of experience in this era. Today, social scientists no longer consider identity a coherent, monolithic, and enduring construct. Rather, new work struggles with an understanding of how identities are crafted and re-crafted as youth make their way in varied social settings. (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002, p. 92)

Identities—or the performance of identity—can change in an instant: imagine a teenager in a classroom with her smart phone hidden by her bulky bag. In one moment she can be texting her friends in other classrooms, and the next moment she may look up and answer

[5] The notion of bordering worlds, border zones and border crosses has been used by many theorists; in particular, see Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

her teacher's question about exponential growth. She is enacting both an identity of resistance by texting in her classroom, and a simultaneous identity of compliance by participating in class. Furthermore, she is engaging in at least two different communities, both of which are part of the figured world of her high school at this moment in time (Wenger, 1999). While there may be a "core identity," or some sense of self that is constant over given situations, there are definitely subjective identities that are fluid based on historical, institutional and sociocultural contexts (Gee, 2000).

Hermans describes a "dialogical self" that represents both this unity of identity and a multiplicity. With increasing globalization and transnationalism, "hybrid phenomena result from the transformation of existing cultural practices into new ones and create 'multiple identities'" (Hermans, 2001). Identity is not one particular quality but is more a complex interaction between individuals and the many cultures that they participate. These multiple identities reflect, in part, intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, history and locality. Globalization has amplified the complexities and, at times, incongruities of multimembership in different communities (Bhatia, 2011; Bruna, 2007; Hornberger, 2007; Warriner, 2007). Digital tools and social media, as well, have enabled individuals to create many online personas, many "possible selves" (Doster, 2013). It is important to remember, though, that humans have always participated in multiple worlds and multiple cultures.

Dorothy Holland et. al. situates the complex phenomena of learning and identity development within "figured worlds." Figured worlds are socially constructed by their participants, who can be recruited or who can join willingly. Figured worlds provide contexts of meaning that position people in particular power structures. Figured worlds

are socially reproduced by their participants (or slowly develop as existing figured worlds are rejected). Finally, figured worlds create a variety of scripts and roles that assist people in quickly assessing meaning, significance and positionality (D. Holland et al., 1998). Individuals are highly constrained by the figured worlds they are a part of, however they have agency in how they "author" themselves. The process of authoring one's self can be conceptual or material—combining an idea of an internal identity that exists in the mind through inner speech, and an external identity that is manifest through behavior and action (Ochs & Capps, 1996).

This research employs a sociocultural understanding of identity and identity negotiations. I conceptualize identity as a type of script or understanding that allows people to find coherence and meaning in life, as well as to drive their actions in societal contexts (D. Holland & Lave, 2001a; D. Holland et al., 1998). Identity is not something internal to an individual, or created solely by culture, but it is a complex interchange between the self and others. Identity is also multifaceted: it can relate to the individual's interpretation of the true nature of their selves, and the interpretation they wish to project for others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). All of these concepts are fluid, and multiple understandings can exist at any given instance (Hermans, 2001). These understandings can be simultaneously coherent or contradictory.

Identity and Intersectionality: All about Appearances

In any examination of identity, the various intersections with race, class, ethnicity, geography, sexuality and gender need to be considered. These are all characteristics that we embody: they are often seen in our skin, heard in our voices, and apparent even in the way we greet people. For the young women in this study, these issues overlapped and

intertwined in complex ways. Studying each characteristic of identity in isolation has limited value, but the literature regarding these various aspects can lend to our understanding of how identity works in the lives of these women.

Race, immigration and ethnicity. Outward appearances—whether skin color, language, or specific cultural practices that contrast to whatever is considered the norm—are a marker of difference, and as such become integral to the way that people conceptualize "who" they are. While there is important overlap between the idea of race and immigration for some groups of people, I will consider both separately for the purposes of this study.

Race has been recognized as a key aspect of identity, particularly in the United States. Jean Phinney looked at racial and ethnic intersectionalities with identity development (Phinney & Ong, 2007). That these particular characteristics are determined by birth does not suggest individuals lack agency in crafting their identity. Race and ethnicity complicate the process of identity development, but do not control it:

> Nevertheless, people have choices in the ways in which they deal with their assigned ethnic categories and in the meanings they hold regarding their group membership. The process of ethnic identity formation involves the construction over time of one's sense of self as a group member and of one's attitudes and understandings associated with group membership. (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 275)

Because virtually all racial and ethnic minorities have been subject to discrimination and prejudice, Phinney proposed that it is particularly important for the formation of an

"achieved" ethnic identity to reject negative attitudes in regard to the racial or ethnic group one belongs.

While there may be such general processes specific to the development of group identity across races and ethnicities, there will also be group-specific factors such as attitudes, values and behaviors that will need to be considered when studying ethnic identify development. For instance, John Ogbu distinguishes between voluntary and non-voluntary minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). He suggests the achievement gap among African-Americans in comparison to their peers can be explained in part by the oppositional identity that commonly develops among African-American youth.

Both Phinney's proposition of racial identity development and Ogbu's treatment of group racial identity rely on an understanding of identity development as a compartmentalized process that progresses in linear ways. Phinney and Ogbu suggest individuals develop a particular racialized identity that is somewhat constant throughout different situations. They both fail to look at identity as a construct that can simultaneously embrace multiple ways of looking at and participating in a situation. As a result, their theories are part of a larger body of research on minority populations that have focused on race and ethnicity in decontextualized ways (Brittian, 2012).

There is a movement in the field to study identity formation of African-American youth in a more ecological and integrated framework that "considers the intricate, relational nature of biological, psychological, social and historical influences on African-American identity development (Brittian, 2012; Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Weisskirch, 2008). For instance, Miron and Lauria study the differences the school racial climate has on two groups of African-American students in the same neighborhood; students at the

school with a color-blind approach to racial politics expressed their political identities differently than those at the school that recognized racial differences (Miron & Lauria, 1995). This broader sociocultural approach to studying the development of racial identity in context is reflective of a more general movement in research to move from the traditional, linear conceptions of identity to more modern and expansive ones.

Immigration—separate, but related to issues of race and ethnicity—is another important aspect of identity for many people, and particularly for some of the young women in this study. While they themselves may not be immigrants, many of their parents emigrated from Mexico. Adolescents living "at the margins" of two or more cultures must be able to navigate the many nuances of cultural membership as they move in and out of various social groups and contexts. Whether the adolescents themselves or their parents are considered the immigrant, they must negotiate a new culture with new rules and practices, as well as the old value systems of their parents and diaspora community. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2002) examine many of the particular challenges immigrant children to the United States and other industrialized countries have, including a ubiquitous status system where they often "feel deprived in relation to the more affluent lifestyles of the mainstream culture" (pg. 88). These children are aware of their outsider status and their perpetual "neither here nor there" status that deprives them of more politically neutral identities. Finally, the lack of parental "cultural guides" upsets the traditional parent-child roles (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002, p. 92).

John Ogbu describes how the cultural context of migration and the receiving community affects the attitudes of individuals toward adopting or rejecting new behaviors (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). While it is important to note that individuals have

choice and agency in their own identity formation, the context of both their diaspora group identity and the attitudes of the receiving community will impact developmental pathways for immigrants, *as well as people perceived as immigrants* (Getrich, 2013).

These issues are particularly salient in the Southwestern United States, where immigration from Latin America has come to dominate the news and politics. Wilson, Ek and Douglas describe the schools in such places as educational borderlands:

> In public education, students of color and immigrant youth find they have to carefully cross in and out of bordered spaces or borderlands. These include some spaces in which they have been disempowered and segregated; others in which they are affirmed, and still others where they seek mobility yet are oppressed or unwelcomed. Weapons in this context include legislation, curriculum, and educational practices designed to physically, intellectually, and socially restrain students—weapons that make it easier for educators to avoid engaging diversity or rectifying inequities. (Wilson, Ek, & Douglas, 2014, p. 2)

Because of officially endorsed racial profiling and sweeping generalizations, the political atmosphere is one in which simply having any Hispanic background makes the issue of immigration a personal one (K. F. Jackson et al., 2013).

A movement has begun toward more understanding and amnesty toward undocumented children whose parents made the decision immigrate. A summary of the Dream Act from the National Immigration Law Center hints at the complexities multiple contexts create for these adolescents:

> The Dream Act is bipartisan legislation that addresses the tragedy of young people who grew up in the United States and have graduated from our high

> schools, but whose future is circumscribed by our current immigration laws. Under current law, these young people generally derive their immigration status solely from their parents, and if their parents are undocumented or in immigration limbo, most have no mechanism to obtain legal residency, even if they have lived most of their lives in the U.S. (National Immigration Law Center, 2011)

It is unclear what part of the situation is being labeled a "tragedy," and the ambiguity is likely intentional. Some people will see the "forced" migration of children from Mexico to the United States as the tragedy, and some will see the lack of opportunities as the tragedy. It is important for young people in this part of the country, particularly minority youth, to accurately assess the attitudes of others as they move in and out of different contexts (Dejaeghere & McCleary, 2010). This allows them to choose which of the many identities, or aspects of their identities, they wish to inhabit at any given time, and what the possible ramifications will be of that choice.

Gender, sex and sexuality. Gender is perhaps the most influential factor in development. Originally Erikson glossed over gender. He primarily used males in his research and assumed that females would follow similar developmental paths. When further research did not bear this out, females were often considered to have abnormal development because they deviated from what was "normal" (Lytle, Bakken, & Romig, 1997). Slowly, the psychological community began to question this perspective. Stemming from research she conducted with Lawrence Kohlberg (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971), Carol Gilligan published her influential book "A Different Voice," that argued, in part, that interdependence was as important as independence for healthy identity development (Gilligan, 1977, 1987).

Research on identity development among girls and young women has found a bevy of issues to explore. There exists now a public fascination with differences between boys and girls, and an urgency to address certain issues that contribute to enduring societal inequities. Differences in the pursuit of and achievement in STEM related fields has been linked to structural issues in education, biological differences between boys and girls, and persistent conceptions of what are appropriate roles for women (Baron, Bell, Corson, Kostina-Ritchey, & Frederick, 2012; Robelen, 2012; D. Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; M. Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Teen pregnancy/parenthood, eating disorders, bullying and depression are increasingly considered an unfortunate reality of female adolescent development (Pipher, 1994; Simmons, 2002; Wiseman, 2009). However, much of the popular discourse about adolescent girls (reflected in part by the many books written for popular audiences) has a tendency to focus on middle class white girls (Bettie, 2000). These omissions ignore the complexities brought by the intersection of culture, class, race, and ethnicity.

For young minority women, each of these factors has primarily negative societal connotations in the broader discourse that holds college education as the key to success, despite existing structural barriers within the public school system. An ethnographic study by Julio Cammarota, for example, disentangles the way that resistance strategies for urban Latino and Latina youth differ by gender, while varying still more among individual girls (Cammarota, 2004). Cammarota illustrates how school has the potential to be both oppressive and liberating for these women. Academic achievement becomes a way for Latinas to resist negative societal expectations while simultaneously establishing

an identity as capable, independent and equal to those without the "disadvantages" of their gender, race, culture and class.

While it is important to understand general group characteristics and dynamics, for a useful examination of identity formation and its implications in education we must proceed with caution. Katherine Schultz, in her examination of the narratives of young women in an urban context, furthers the point that teachers need to look at their students not as a collection of demographic characteristics, but as individuals:

> It is not useful to generalize about urban females, poor youth, or even females from a particular ethnicity or race. Geographic location, class, races, or gender may give us clues about a particular student. However, there are countless examples of youth who grew up next door to each other in similar circumstances… who lead different lives with different goals and aspirations. (Schultz, 1999, p. 99)

She argues that geographic location, class, race and gender might provide clues about any particular student, but that "generalized identities of their peer groups" are not what we need to strive to understand in order to create nurturing and supportive schools (Schultz, 1999, pp. 99-100). Nonetheless, academic literature is currently structured with demographic characteristics at the forefront. I will revisit some of the relevant research regarding female adolescent development in the next section regarding urban contexts.

The Figured World of Urban High Schools

City High is a racially and ethnically mixed school of about 1500 students. Hispanics comprise the largest ethnic group (69%), with smaller percentages of African-American (11%), White (11%), and others (9%). City High has a more diverse

population than other schools in its district, and is designated as a Title 1 school (i.e. students have a high rate of poverty). There have been several studies of identity formation in similar environments, with similar populations, that bear relevance. These studies have underscored the importance of positive identity formation among adolescents, for both individuals and for our society.

Being identified as "urban."[6] Beth Rubin studied the figured world of an urban high school and the academic identities that were afforded to students (Rubin, 2007). Rampant deficit thinking and low expectations were serving to perpetuate the low academic performance of the students. In this high school, learning was narrowly defined as successful completion of decontextualized tasks that emphasize rote knowledge. Rubin uses examples of curriculum, interactions between teachers and students, and interview data to paint a painful picture of the world and its effects on students:

> Given the particularities of this figured world, being a smart or good student was quite difficult. Classroom activities were frequently boring and meaningless. Interactions with teachers could be insulting and pejorative. Learning was distant from meaning, creativity, interest and engagement. Yet despite the difficulties of being smart in this setting, when students did not do well they tended to blame themselves and each other for laziness. (Rubin, 2007, pp. 240-241)

Opportunities for critical thinking—particularly about race and class—were ignored and even discouraged. Rubin notes that even being "successful" in this figured world would

[6] "Urban" is a word burdened by multiple meanings. See Henry Giroux's "Rewriting the discourse of racial identity: toward a pedagogy and politics of whiteness" and Dyan Watson's "Norming suburbia: how teachers talk about race without using race words" (Giroux, 1997; Watson, 2012).

not equate with being prepared for the more demanding expectations of higher education. Sadly, the students of this school were internalizing assessments of themselves as "lazy" or otherwise deficient.

Not all urban schools are fueled by a deficit model of the student population, however (Michael, Andrade, & Bartlett, 2007; Miron & Lauria, 1995). Some high schools, or specific programs within the high schools, directly address college-readiness skills in an attempt to increase their alumnae success in post-secondary education.

In a longitudinal study over the course of a school year, Hungerford-Kresser and Amaro-Jimenez follow five Latina/o students in their first year at a state university. While they felt that they were academically prepared for high school, they encountered many challenges that high school did not address. Only two of the five participants continued on to their second year at the university. The researchers point to a variety of factors like financial constraints and familial obligations. However, the underlying issue seemed to be identity processes (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012). The students had to position themselves in a new figured world. This entailed recognizing existing power structures, integrating their past experiences, and enacting a new "college student" identity that would allow them to be successful.

The role of whiteness. Beyond understanding how class and social capital impact on individual lives, young women coming from urban and minority backgrounds need to be able to recognize and deconstruct whiteness as the *de facto* norm. While the norms of whiteness are more obvious to minority students, many of the values are deeply engrained in our collective psyche as a nation. As Omi and Winant remind us, "race is always at the crossroads of identity and social structure" (Omi & Winant, 2008). Unfortunately, through movements towards nationalized curriculum and a "color-blind" nation, discussions of this sort are being silenced before they even begin (Apple, 2003; Castagno, 2008; Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2007).

For instance, research on the construct of "smartness" reveals how whiteness and racial politics are continually at play during the crucial time when children are developing academic identities (Hatt, 2012). In her study of marginalized urban youth, Beth Hatt found that the students she interviewed consistently distinguished between "book smarts" and "street smarts." This was a way of resisting the delegitimization of their everyday experiences:

> When youth are framed as failures in school, they are forced to adopt the "angle" of street smarts over book smarts to find a way to succeed and get the things they want out of life. It is their own way of refiguring smartness and finding some sense of agency within the institutionalized figured world of smartness where schools overwhelmingly do not allow for students to be both street smart and book smart. (Hatt, 2007, p. 163)

However, many students still internalized the belief that they were less intelligent, learning disabled or incapable of doing college level work. Furthermore, people who are

framed as being smart in schools view the system as fair and meritocratic. These are the people who, through the status and power "smartness" has bestowed on them, go on to perpetuate this figured world of smartness (Hatt, 2007), and thus this system of racial inequality (Gillborn, 2005).

Research on adolescents' attitudes regarding the role race and class has on future work success shows a diversity of opinions. Often they show a complex blending of the ideas of a meritocracy and persistent social inequities (Noonan, Spencer, Belle, & Hewitt, 2012). Other studies have shown that urban and minority youth often have high educational and career goals (Halfond, Corona, & Moon, 2013; Kenny et al., 2007; Phinney, Baumann, & Blanton, 2001; Rubin, 2007). These goals are simultaneously encouraged and discouraged by schools that stress "college-readiness" and the belief that all students should attend college, while at the same time often failing to adequately prepare students for higher academic work or even developing the confidence needed for success (Miron & Lauria, 1995).

In a study of life goals across different ethnic groups, Phinney, Baumann and Blanton found that most respondents attributed their eventual attainment of these goals as a product of internal factors rather than external factors. Viewing our society as a functioning meritocracy can have lasting negative effects on minority youth. Denying or minimizing the possible roles of race and class may lead to self-blame if students do not reach their high goals (Blustein et al., 2010; Kenny et al., 2007).

"Acting white" is a phenomena many minority youth struggle with as they advance—or fail to advance—in public education. The acceptance of or resistance to the styles and standards of whiteness is more multilayered and less dichotomous than Ogbu's

original formulation of oppositional and assimilative orientations. Prudence Carter shows in her study of African-American and Latina/o youth there are a wide range of meanings that "acting white" is ascribed by individuals, peer groups, families, and those associated with the structural institutions that embody Whiteness. It seems that the view of many teachers within the school system, however, is that not adopting the tastes, mannerism or values of white America is a rejection of formal education and notions of "success" (Carter, 2006). It is vital that youth are able to navigate across these cultural boundaries without feeling that they are betraying their racial histories or personal identity.

Addressing stereotypes and stereotype threats. Increasingly researchers and educators believe focusing on changing enduring structural inequities might not be the only way to address achievement inequality. Pablo Freire initially put forth the notion that "critical consciousness" was an essential part of learning and education, and made it part and parcel of his literacy efforts in Brazil (Freire, 1982, 1993). In a similar vein, brief, powerful psychological interventions hold some promise for lessening the achievement divide, although they are far from a panacea (Yeager, Walton, & Cohen, 2013).

For instance, an ethnic studies curriculum developed in Tucson, Arizona showed remarkable achievement gains for students who participated (Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Cintli Rodríguez, 2013). Unfortunately, the idea of raising critical consciousness among minority teenagers, or recognizing race in a new "color-blind" era, did not sit well with many Arizonians. Legislation is currently being reviewed in the courts regarding this

particular program, and the autonomy of public schools to design a curriculum that is relevant and engaging for students (Zehr, 2010).

Research is showing that some of these interventions do not need to be time consuming, like the program in Tucson. A program in a California High School showed better than expected achievement and college attendance than their ethnic make-up predicted, after a brief intervention. Educators and psychologists had the students complete several 15 minute writing exercises "that bolster students' resistance to stereotypes and change the way they think about learning" (Winerman, 2011). Importantly, the shift in changing attitudes was directed at the students, not "society." A different study in Connecticut employed a similar writing task: write about a value that is personal relevant and explain why it mattered to them (Cohen, 2013; Cohen & Sherman, 2014). The control group chose a value that did not matter to them and wrote about why it mattered to someone else. The remarkable improvement of participants, in the original study and its replications, was still measureable three years later (Miyake et al., 2010). These strategies are also being used to address gender gaps in STEM fields.

Gender and sexuality in the urban school context. In agreement to the current literature on teenage girls, the participants in this study are continually confronted with conflicting notions of "ideal girl." Families set the stage with their own notions of femininity and the "role" of women within the family. Familial expectations are often rooted within racial and ethnic traditions, but are adapted and localized by each individual family. Persisting notions of "whiteness" reinforce a narrowly defined physical ideal of "prettiness," and conjure visions of the peppy cheerleader archetype or the privileged, popular "Queen Bee" (Asencio & Battle, 2010; Wiseman, 2009). In the

popular arena, more modern conceptions of "girl power" might put forth confident, bold and "sassy" ideals (Bettis & Adams, 2005). On its face, a less passive or victim-centered ideal is an advancement for girls and women, but it also represents one more narrative of "ideal girl" that young women have to reconcile.

Teachers in urban schools, on the other hand, are likely to recognize "ideal girls" as studious, kind and caring. Beth Rubin described the characteristics of the "ideal" student constructed in one urban school:

> … compliant, worked quickly and alone, and did not present problems or difficulties requiring a teacher's attention. The way to tell that someone was smart, students' reported, was if he or she received good grades… Smartness in this figured world was linked to diligence in completing assigned tasks. (Rubin, 2007, p. 240)

Likewise, Jonathan Kozol's popular-press book "Savage Inequalities" vividly details how urban schools emphasize obedience and low-level thinking skills for both girls and boys, in comparison to those in the suburbs. This expectation is two-fold for teenage girls in urban schools, because girls generally are already expected to be passive, agreeable, and content with the existing status quo (D. Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; M. Sadker & Sadker, 1994). As a result, girls are often considered to be "easier for teachers to deal with, and therefore more likely to be successful (Wortham, 2004, p. 171). As passive girls continue to succeed through compliance, the cycle reinforces itself.

This daunting task of reconciling incompatible ideals is reflected in the enduring trope of the "good girl." Rachel Simmons describes the modern manifestations of "good girl" in her popular press book "The Curse of the Good Girl," in which she draws on

interviews with middle-class girls who participated in her "Girl Leadership Institute." Simmons presents a striking picture of how girls view these passive, compliant, and perhaps mythical creatures:

> The Good Girl walked a treacherous line, balancing mixed messages about how far she should go and how strong she should be: she was to be enthusiastic while being quiet; smart with no opinions on things; intelligent but a follower; popular but quiet. She would be something, but not too much. (Simmons, 2009, p. 4)

This encapsulates both traditional ideas of femininity, as well as more modern interpretations that highlight women's strengths and abilities. While the conception of what constitutes the "ideal girl" is shifting in popular culture, both ideals exist simultaneously in the lives' of teenagers in the United States. Young women today encounter a myriad of conflicting interpretations of who they "should" be; who they actually "are" cannot possibly measure up to all of them.

At play are the interactions and expectations of peers (both male and female), families, and a larger "American public" that judges these young people against morally and politically laden value systems. This struggle against public perception and stereotypes played a large role in the lives of the urban minority girls that Katherine Schultz worked with. She showed the complex identity negotiations that took place in trying to navigate the different contexts of school and home, their realities and their aspirations (Schultz, 1999). Schultz the strategies they employed to be successful in these multiple contexts over a three year period. For instance, Schultz noted that many of her participants had "oppositional attitudes" that manifested in two distinct ways:

> At times, they displayed this alienated oppositional identity and refused to participate in activities and behaviors that would help them to "succeed" in a traditional sense (e.g. to graduate from high school). In other situations…they used their oppositional "attitudes" to prove the dominant culture wrong and to work toward getting ahead. (Schultz, 1999, p. 85).

Shultz also identified ways that schools supported these students without imposing unattainable ideals. She noted that the most successful women had strong mentors that they could talk with. Shultz further cautioned that "even a terrible year in high school is not a predictor of failure" (Schultz, 1999, p. 100). For these students, it was important that they were not permanently disadvantaged by one or two years of poor high school performance.

Both gender and sexuality have complicated ramifications for girls and young women growing up in an urban context. Importantly, Schultz looked at the complex ways the young women felt about and (often) dealt with pregnancy and motherhood. In a broader study, Elizabeth Heilman studied high school girls in a both suburban and urban contexts. She looked at the different expectations of adolescent girls, and the power dynamics inherent in these positionings (Heilman, 1998). Her research showed how young women struggled to exert power in the face of stereotypes of femininities, and how this struggle often led to eating disorders, unhealthy romantic relationships, and unhelpful competition with peers. Family and cultural values can add to this complexity by perpetuating the double standard that accepts (or encourages) sexually active boys, but rejects sexually active girls (Espinoza, 2010; Killoren, Updegraff, & Christopher, 2011).

The specific issue of female sexuality is brought to the forefront by researchers like Melissa Hyams, who describes a double bind for female adolescents (Hyams, 2000). On one hand, they are still in this netherworld of non-adulthood, deemed incapable of making lasting decisions like committing to marriage. On the other hand, any expression of sexuality positions them as immoral. A common perception is that young minority women are actively trying to get pregnant and to go on public assistance. As a result, the Latinas that she interviewed felt they had a choice between being academically successful students or being sexualized beings. "Avoiding pregnancy" as a recipe for success is seen throughout the research literature, as well as my own interactions with young urban women.

These studies, many with seemingly heterogeneous girls, show how individual attitudes often differ drastically from girl to girl, and change over time.
One uniting factor is that prevalent societal narratives that espouse meritocracy run directly counter to the actual lived experiences of adolescent girls. Schultz, both a researcher and an experienced teacher, advocates creating safe spaces for young women where they can find support and engage in dialogues about the issues that affect them the most. She underscores the importance of addressing inequities in teaching and curriculum, as well as opportunities to critically examine media, social rhetoric, and persistent gender inequality (Schultz, 1999).

Educational Contexts: Why Identity Matters

The relevance of identity to the daily life of educators and students can seem very "ivory tower" when the day's objective is to teach students how to factor binomials. However, identity is what educators are ultimately concerned with. Education provides

students with experiences that change their understanding of the world and their understanding of themselves. When a math teacher "covers" factoring in a freshman algebra class, she is sharing a cultural tool used to do mathematical work. She is also teaching students something about who they are and how they are perceived by others (Wortham, 2004b). These smaller identities—as a student, a mathematician, a learner, and a member of any number of communities—change with each of our experiences (even high school algebra!).

There is a growing belief among educators that, in order to best serve students, educators need to recognize the ways that specific power structures shape lives (Giroux, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Schools need to create places for dialogue where students themselves can critically examine the ways these categories shape their lives (Banks, 2002; Greene, 2000; Urrieta Jr & Machado-Casas, 2013). There are three distinct arguments for schools to be concerned with identity issues: First, identity development and learning are synonymous, and schools have always been in "the business" of creating and nurturing both academic and social identities (Black et al., 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Second, students, particularly those in non-dominant positions, need to be aware of structural inequality in our society. Through critical and transformative education, these social inequities can be addressed (Freire, 1982; Urrieta Jr & Machado-Casas, 2013; Wallerstein, 1987). Finally, in order to be individually successful, and collectively have a successful economy/nation, people need to continuously modulate their identities to suit the myriad of contexts available in our interconnected and global 21st century society (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Hermans &

Dimaggio, 2007; Kaplan & Flum, 2012). These issues are gaining importance in the public's imagination, but are competing with the increasingly traditional ways we as a nation envision public schools.

Consequently, 21st century schools have some key limitations from promoting an identity development agenda. The prevailing cultural attitude toward education is guided by a focus on "accountability." For instance, educational legislation demands state agencies adopt teaching and learning performance "standards" and demonstrate continual student growth until all students are "adequately" educated (Gay, 2007). This concept is rooted in our history of a meritocracy in the United States; it is a given that if people only worked harder, and perhaps more efficiently, that success is attainable. Consequently, schools focus on test preparation that narrows the curriculum, emphasizes discrete skills, and rewards rote memorization rather than critical thinking (Sleeter, 2012). Finally, teachers have less time and freedom to plan educational opportunities that their students may find relevant and compelling (Kennedy, 2005; Melnick & Meister, 2008).[7]

Current research tends to focus on implications within the classroom (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Informal educational opportunities offer an arena where identity issues might more effectively be addressed in the current political atmosphere (Jones & Deutsch, 2013; McWhirter & Luginbuhl, 2014). Informal educational opportunities—like club participation, sports, or special support programs offered during class time—are also a way for students who do not always excel in academics to find a more relevant and

[7] The 2013 OECD "Teaching and Learning International Study" reports that teachers in the United States spend more time actually teaching per week than the international average (27 hours versus 19 hours), which translates into less time in the work day to plan instruction. Teachers in the United States also spend significantly more time working each week than the international average (45 hours vs 38 hours), suggesting more demanding workloads and less work-life balance (OECD, 2014).

meaningful connection to their school community (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006, 2010). A better understanding of student identity work will assist educators in designing relevant and constructive opportunities for students. Qualitative research, in particular, is needed to achieve this, as Fredricks, et. al. proposed over a decade ago:

> We need to know more about age, individual, racial, and cultural differences in how individuals respond to opportunities afforded by educational contexts and how the differences affect school success. More multi-method, observational, and ethnographic studies would contribute to this effort. Such information is essential for creating finely tuned interventions that target specific aspects of the environment. (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004, p. 87)

This effort has yet to be fully realized in this country; the present research study is an attempt to add to our overall understanding of the intersections of identity, school, and engagement.

Relevance of the Current Study

This study uses a social practice theory of identity (D. Holland & Lave, 2001b, 2009) with a framework of figured worlds (D. Holland et al., 1998) to contextualize the lives and stories of its participants as they navigate a large, urban high school. The framework of figured worlds has been increasingly used in educational research, particularly because of its view of individuals as agentive in their own identity formation (Hatt, 2007; D. Holland et al., 1998; Hungerford-Kresser & Vetter, 2012; Levinson et al., 1996; Michael et al., 2007; Rubin, 2007; Urrieta Jr, 2007; Urrieta, 2007). This contrasts with a more traditional perspective that might emphasize essentialism and the immutability of identity categories. Studies utilizing a figured worlds' perspective

instead describe the nuances of power structures and social position, as well as the particular moment in time in which they are situated

This theoretical perspective has been increasingly popular in the academic literature specifically about high schools, the high school experience, and adolescence (e.g. Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014; Hatt, 2007; Michael et al., 2007; Rubin, 2007; Urrieta Jr, 2007; Ye, Varelas, & Guajardo, 2011). These particular figured worlds are part of a larger, more enduring figured world of public education (Pennington, 2007). With its long history deeply entrenched in our collective psyches, this larger context has easily recognizable characters, scripts, landscapes and relationships. This study builds upon and adds to our understanding of the high school experience as a familiar, but contestable, figured world (Hatt, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Wortham, 2004a). Specifically, I seek to uncover the diversity of ways that social and academic identities are constructed within a seemingly similar context.

Research questions: listening, not suggesting. The study I have conducted with urban, minority adolescents is not, like much of the existing literature, situated in the context of teen motherhood, "last-chance" schools, or the pressure of media and society to look and act in gender specific ways . Neither are the participants of this study are not defined by being bullied or by the things they own. That these young women are racial and ethnic minorities in a large urban school was not addressed specifically by my questions or their responses. This is consistent with a sociocultural view of identity as being multiple, changeable, and contextual. It also reflects my personal commitment to affording students as much agency as practical in defining their own selves.

Paradoxically, the strength of this study comes from the lack of these types of singular foci. Because identity can be theorized in so many different ways, there are myriad problems that arise from adopting any particular stance (Gaudelli, 2001; Lubienski, 2003). One commonality in the research appears to be that the educational establishment has a difficult time predicting what matters most to their particular students, or how they actually see themselves (Irizarry, 2007; Shields, 1999). I believe the impact of *a priori* research questions themselves—often conceptualized as how "factor a" influences "factor b" in participants' lives—drastically impact the very phenomena we seek to investigate. By framing the initial research question as a general exploration—*what stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct and what matters most in these narratives?*—this study sought to minimize the bias resulting from *a priori* researcher frameworks.

The hope was, to the greatest extent possible, that the effect of societal positionings on participant narrations could be uncovered indirectly, just as these positionings tend to work indirectly to shape our everyday lives. These young women had the opportunity to identify, for someone from the educational establishment, the issues they felt important. Within an educational context where they often travel unnoticed, these young women were able to narrate their life stories in a way that allowed for maximum agency, coherence and meaning. The second research question—*how do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?*—seeks to honor that agency by examining how these women negotiated meaning and identity during the interview, as well as the content of the stories themselves.

Finally, the third research question—*what role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?*—addresses how school helps to shape the lives of these young women. Often educational research looks toward classrooms and "official" academics to find answers about how identity is established, maintained and changed within schools. However, classrooms, curriculum, teachers and students all operate under countless restraints that make the system as a whole resistant to change. The "informal" curriculum may offer one of the opportunities for a variety of students to learn about themselves, their community, and the possibilities of the future.

Participants: quiet, successful, and strong. This study is also special because of the participants themselves. Yes, they might be considered part of a "vulnerable" group based on socioeconomic background, ethnicity, language, citizenship or most generally, their gender. However, their vulnerabilities were not their common link; instead, it was their willingness to have new experiences, to become "part" of something and make connections with other people. This "something" was an extracurricular scrapbooking club that met weekly during school lunches.

Ironically, this commonality, in the end, had a relatively tangential importance in their lives. They did not define who they were in terms of membership to this particular club, nor did the amount of time they spent in scrapbooking make it a central part of their routine. However, the mere act of participation in an extracurricular club reflected engagement in school. School engagement, research has shown, is a necessary ingredient for emotional, physical and social wellbeing as well as academic achievement (Resnick et al., 1997; Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993)

Existing research has primarily involved two distinct groups: high school students who lack the necessary engagement and connection to school, or high school students participating in activities that become central parts of their identity and experience (Atkiss, Moyer, Desai, & Roland, 2011; Kort-Butler, 2012; P. Williams, Bridge, & Pocock, 2009). These young women exist in an "in-between."[8] They have tried a variety of different experiences to find ones that resonate with them. Some experiences were better than others, and some participants found a "niche" in the school community that other participants did not.

Existing in an "in-between" space often relegates adolescents to a kind of obscurity: they do not get the full-ride academic or athletic scholarships, nor are they expelled after a long series of entertaining escapades. Rather, they were all polite, respectful young people who were willing to participate when asked. None of the participants had any major behavioral issues at school, and were all positively regarded by their teachers. Being in the middle does not make them less extraordinary, however. All of these young women are articulate, critical thinkers aware of social constraints that bind them and opportunities that exist to transcend these constraints. Each participant wove a cohesive narrative around one or two central themes. They were selective in what they told me, how it was told, why it was told. They all wondered how they will pay for college, and have contingency plans if they run into problems (Howard et al., 2010;

[8] This "in-between" status is ubiquitous in the lives of young women, who are continually encountering competing notions of who they are and who they should be (Bettis & Adams, 2005). Being "in-between" is also reflected in the very nature of my word choice throughout this dissertation. For that reason I have utilized multiple descriptors for my participants and their peer group, including "girls," "young women," and "adolescent females."

Kenny et al., 2007). All of these young women might be described generically—and dismissively—as "good girls."

Good girls can travel through the figured world of high school largely unheralded and unfettered. These girls typically do not get asked to participate in research studies, because their lives, on the surface, seem rather mundane or uneventful. It is has been a missed opportunity for schools and society to recognize how very exceptional these young women are.[9] This study does something that the educational community often does not: listen to these quiet, but valuable voices. We can learn from their stories and their narratives about resilience, about the "little things" in life that shape their experience, and about the characteristics of a school community that are necessary for a quiet—and successful—high school experience.

[9] One notable counterexample to this gap in the literature is Pamela Bettis and Natalie Adams' compilation of essays, "Geographies of Girlhood: Identities In-Between" (2005). They describe these geographies as "the in-between spaces and places found within and outside the formal domain of schools that [are] central to how girls make sense of themselves" (p. 5).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview of the Study

This study examines the identity work done by a small population of young urban women attending a Title I high school. Specifically, this study examines three fundamental questions:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

The individuals recruited for this study were initially identified through their participation in an extracurricular scrapbooking club at their high school, City High[10]. City High is a racially and ethnically mixed school of about 2000 students. Hispanics comprise the largest ethnic group (60%), with smaller percentages of African American (15%), White (15%), and others (10%). City High has a more diverse population than other schools in its district, and is designated as a Title 1 school (students have a high rate of poverty).

At the time, I was a teacher at City High, as well as one of two club sponsors of the scrapbooking club (see Appendix A). Levels of participation in the scrapbooking

[10] The name of the high school, as well as all of the participant's names, have been changed to protect their privacy.

club during the time period of the study varied substantially. The original research proposal intended to use evidence and artifacts from club participation in addition to interview data in order to address the research questions. However, due to the varying levels of participation as the school year progressed, the study was modified to use only the data from participant interviews.

The club itself had weekly meetings during Friday lunches in one of the science classrooms. The lunch period was approximately 40 minutes, and some of the participants needed to wait in the cafeteria line to get their food before they came to the meeting. These time limitations were one of the factors that influenced participation throughout the year. Some students reported a general "fatigue" from their classrooms, and explained that they needed "down time" during their school day to socialize and talk. At the time, they did not see the scrapbooking club as a place to find that "down time."

Because participation in the scrapbooking club was inconsistent, the club itself became less of a central unifying theme for the study. The initial reason to place the study within the context of the club was not only to incorporate student artifacts as data, but also to gather data throughout the course of the school year relating to club participation and identity negotiations within the club. The nature of the study changed after the participants had been selected. Importantly, though, each participant was involved in the club at some point during for the school year. This indicates each student was inclined to participate in the school community outside of required classes. Engagement in clubs and other school related activities reflects a specific orientation toward school, and is associated with different academic and social outcomes (Resnick et

al., 1997; Resnick et al., 1993). This needs to be kept in mind when considering how the results of this study may inform work with similar populations in similar contexts.

Research Design

This study was conceived as a way to give students a voice while simultaneously having the opportunity to watch identity work in progress. Life history narratives were used to examine the experience and voice of students, while simultaneously serving an opportunity for students to practice the negotiation of identity.

This study is not auto-ethnographical or autobiographical, but neither does it deny my voice or my experiences in an attempt to screen out "personal bias," as is the tendency for practitioner researchers (Anderson, 2002). I have relied on my experience as both an educator and academic to conduct a study that is "biographically grounded, experientially rich engagement with the social processes that are observable in the field, and that render those processes comprehensible in particular ways" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 401).

Why use a narrative approach? Traditional educational research has relied on what Polkinghorne (2010) describes as theoretically based knowledge. Theories are translated into a testable hypothesis about a specific pedagogical practice. Data are collected, and theories that are more often right than wrong become "empirically supported" (Polkinghorne, 2010). There are several problems with this approach. First, theories are intended to prescribe certain formulas or procedures for addressing specific issues. Second, these theories are taken out of any sort of context, and then used to teach all students, regardless of their circumstances.

Narrative analysis has particular advantages in educational contexts that avoid these pitfalls (Xu & Connelly, 2010). Importantly, it allows the researcher to place the narrative, and the individuals who provide them, in a particular social context (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008). It is this social context that gives stories their meaning. Without context, as Betsy Rymes asserts, the stories are unmoored:

> Many times a student has told me the story of his or her aspirations: a story about being good, showing respect, putting in effort, and becoming a lawyer or doctor one day. This story is meaningless until it is understood as part of a speech event, multiply laminated with different institutional and individual roles and concerns. It becomes meaningful when we see how the speech situation plays a role in shaping that story — and how different stories are told in different situations. (Rymes, 2010, p. 373)

The very definition of achievement and success is a fluid notion. Rymes argues that achievement cannot be defined outside of the context in which it is being regarded, and that it cannot be measured by a static empirical test. Instead, researchers should try to capture what narratives of achievement are being told in certain contexts, and the different ways this is manifest in student's narratives. The lives of teenagers change rapidly, both in a socio-historical sense and a personal one. Narrative recognizes the "moment-in-time" nature of the data that are being collected.

A second rationale for using narrative analysis is that it can capture identity-in-context. Traditionally stories have been regarded as a source of information, a "report" of the lives of their tellers. Narratives, however, are performances of identities as well (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008). The narratives unfold in relation to the audience,

and how the audience interacts with the storyteller. Narrative analysis unites the content of the narrative with the methodology of narration (J. F. Gubrium, 2010). This perspective is far more appropriate when considering the multiple, changing and contextual nature of identity (Fernqvist, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2006a; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Schiffrin, 1996). There is no "essential" identity that students can communicate to us, and therefore the methodology used to interpret the information is part of the overall story being told (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Theoretical model of the interview process. Because there is no "essential" identity that can be articulated to others, and because identity is created through and within sociocultural contexts, biographic interviews cannot give us access to one concise, uncontested narrative of a person's life (Bamberg, 2011a, 2011b). I visualize a simplified version of each interview as a set of four separate and simultaneous narratives: an inner narrative, projected narrative, competing narrative, and co-constructed narrative. Every individual can be thought of as having their own changing, amorphous inner narrative that is constructed conceptually through inner speech. This master story may include incongruities, contradictions, delusions and fantasy; it is how each person sees themselves and it is not subject to the normal rules of logic (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). An interview cannot access this inner narrative; inner narratives are by their nature restricted to the individual self.

While these inner narratives and their mysterious depths are compelling, it is the other three types of narratives that are accessible to researchers. Intentionally or not, people always filter their inner narrative when they share their story with others (projected narrative). These projections are modulated based on the context of the

situation: who is present, where, at what point in time, and so on. This context includes the perceptions of others (competing narratives). Projected narratives may change dynamically in real time as a response to new information and developing circumstances. Finally, new and independent stories are co-created through a process of mutual negotiation (co-constructed narratives).

Because the listener of a narrative shapes the story that is being told, my own relationship with the students must be considered carefully. My role as a researcher was complicated by my role within City High. I worked as a math teacher at the school, although none of the participants were or had been my student. I also participated in the scrapbook club as a co-sponsor. Consequently, the context of the educational setting in which the interviews took place was confounded by my position as a figure of authority. Participant orientation to my identity as a teacher, as suggested by the content and dynamics of the interviews, varied. These orientations were examined systematically (see "Data Analysis"), and used to enrich my discussion of results.

Participants

There were nine students at the scrapbooking club meeting when recruitment took place. During the regular meeting time, I explained my research and distributed the recruitment letter and consent/assent forms. All of the nine students at the meeting were female; throughout the study year, no male students participated in the scrapbooking club. Six students returned the forms the following week and agreed to be in the study. These six participants ranged in class year, ethnicity and family background (Table 1). The ethnic backgrounds reflected the general population of the school, which was predominately Hispanic. Informed consent/assent was obtained from each participant

and their legal guardian (see Appendix B). Because of the backgrounds of the participants and their families, the consent forms were also translated into Spanish. Participation in the research study was not required for inclusion in the scrapbooking club.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Name	Age	Class year	Race/ethnicity	Language background	Family structure
Allison	15	Freshman	Hispanic	Bilingual	Two-parent family plus younger brother
Angie	16	Sophomore	Hispanic	Bilingual	Two-parent family plus older brother, younger sister and unrelated older male
Marie	16	Sophomore	African American	English only	One-parent family plus older sister and two younger brothers
Deborah	17	Senior	Hispanic	Bilingual	Two-parent family plus younger sister
Julia	17	Senior	Hispanic	Bilingual	Two-parent family plus older sister, younger brother and
Elizabeth	18	Senior	"White"/Hispanic	English only (mother bilingual)	Two-parent family plus older sister

Note: Participants who were bilingual spoke English and Spanish. "White" was Elizabeth's word choice.

All of the participants were from “working class” families. The participants were generally good students without a history of any major disciplinary actions. During their interviews, each young woman expressed some degree of connection with City High, either through academic programs, vocational programs or extracurricular activities

(Table 2). Two participants referred to after-school employment. Finally, all of the participants were on academic track to graduate high school in four years.

Table 2. Participant group affiliations and employment

Name	Club/Activity	Special academic programs	Employment
Allison	Scrapbooking	none	none
Angie	Scrapbooking Softball Tennis Soccer	AVID (college readiness program) HOPE (health occupation readiness program)	Fast food restaurant (approximately 24 hours/week)
Marie	Stand and Serve Shades JROTC Chess Club Scrapbooking Marching band Robotics Math club (middle school)	EVIT (career and technical school, planned for following school year)	none
Julie	Scrapbooking NHS Orchestra Culinary	IB program	none
Deborah	Scrapbooking	IB program	none
Elizabeth	Scrapbooking Dance Company	IB/honors classes	New job, unspecified

Data Collection

Because participants were initially selected through their participation in a club that I sponsored, our interactions overall became a source of information for this study. Throughout the year I kept field notes of my interactions with the participants, and was able to use this information to both guide the interviews and support the subsequent case studies. My field notes also contained a record of club activities, such as different projects. The actual products that the young women created in the scrapbooking club,

while not used as a source of data themselves, were described in the field notes and served as reference points during the interviews.

Interview times were scheduled for each participant. These interviews generally were conducted on two separate occasions, and totaled about one hour per participant. The interviews took place during lunch (25 minutes) or study hall periods (55 minutes). The interviews primarily took place in my classroom, where both the participant and I sat at student desks facing each other. Finding time for interviews was challenging, and often these interviews needed to be rescheduled at the last minute. The lives of these particular students were busy, and they had little "free time" that was not absorbed by other priorities (primarily schoolwork).

Interview questions were based on the life history narrative interview technique of McAdams (McAdams, 1996). There were also questions related to the role of schooling, and the relevance of schooling in the participants' lives (see Appendix C). At the beginning of the interview, participants were given an outline of the different topics and questions that I would be asking. Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. The transcription process was attentive to verbal utterances ("you know," "I guess"), as well as unexpected pauses, laughter, and tone.

Data Analysis

The different analyses were conducted using Provalis Research's QDA Miner 4 and WordStat 7. This qualitative data analysis software allowed for segmenting, annotating, coding and lexically analyzing the interview transcripts. The interview transcripts were read in their totality several times before coding.

To address this question regarding the types of stories told and the importance of different themes, individual story units were identified to serve as the basis of the analysis. Stories were demarcated based on a variety of factors; some were clearly bounded by the questions that were asked during the interview, while other stories extended across several interview questions. Occasionally verbal cues served this purpose, like a conclusive "so, what's your next question?" There was rarely one decisive indication that a story was officially beginning or ending; rather, stories emerged organically as a result of the interaction between the storyteller and the listener. Story units often dealt with multiple subjects (e.g. family, society, etc.), as narratives subtly shifted from one topic to another (Bamberg, 2011a; Freeman, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2006b). An indication of this type of transition might be participant pauses in speaking, or shifts in the way the participants were sitting (Fernqvist, 2010).

In total, 178 stories were identified across the six interviews. The number of stories each participant told ranged from 11 stories to 41 stories, with an average of 30 stories per interview. Initially, coding used the event categories developed in previous research on narrative identity (McLean & Pratt, 2006; Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004). This coding scheme—developed to analyze "life defining moment" stories—reflects the storyteller's primary concern. These concerns, like "guilt/shame," or "achievement/mastery," take an Eriksonian approach to psychosocial development. After coding the data accordingly, I recognized the hallmark of a Procrustean argument, and an emphasis on a linear conception of identity development. Several attempts later, the following grounded coding scheme was generated through the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006).

What stories are told, and what matters most? To answer the first research question, two different analyses were conducted. Instead of using traditional plotlines like "redemption" or "quest" to assign a purpose to the stories, categories were developed with the participants' world perspectives in mind. In the first, story units were coded for theme (*self-definition, aspirations, logistics* and *critical awareness*). Then, the same data was coded for content (*achievement, family, interpersonal relationships* and *society*).

Because each interview reflected an overall narrative of success, four basic coding categories were used to categorize the themes of the 178 identified stories. These categories were not mutually exclusive. Personal qualities and abilities *(self-definition)* led to plans *(logistics)* designed to obtain their goals *(aspirations).* Some stories referred to an abstract notion of how the participants connected their own narrative to that of the larger society (*critical awareness).* Stories tended to emphasize one aspect of these identity narratives over the others, but there was some overlap.

Coding progressed to categorize content, in order to address the question, "what matters most?" The same data set was used in this content-based analysis. Subjects that featured most prominently in individual's narratives were presumed to "matter most" to them. After an iterative process of identifying subject matter and condensing code categories, four basic content categories accounted for 93% of the data: *achievement, family, interpersonal relationships* and *society.* Categories were mutually exclusive. Interpersonal relationships referred specifically to non-familial relationships, often with peers. Generally, if the story was focused on inner qualities, such as confidence or introversion, it was coded as an achievement narrative. If the story was specific to a particular relationship (e.g. best friend, teacher) it was coded as an interpersonal

relationship story. An interrater reliability analysis using the Cohen's Kappa statistic was performed on 20% of the data to determine consistency among two raters.

Autonomy themes were identified in the stories, as were autonomy's correlate, collectivism. However, autonomy and collectivism was found to be secondary to the categories of interpersonal relationships and achievement. In other words, some stories about relationships or achievement stressed a growing sense of autonomy from family or peers, while other stories emphasized the benefits of growing familial and personal supports. These orientations were reflected in the overall narratives, but were not classified per individual story.

How do participants negotiate competing narratives? There were two sources of data used to address the second question, both derived from the interview transcripts. To avoid confusion, I refer to these as "interview-as-history" and "interview-as-performance;" these two perspectives exemplify the split in the narrative analysis field between "big" stories and "small" stories (Bamberg, 2011a; Freeman, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2006b). "Interview-as-history" refers to the literal text of the interview; in other words, the stories themselves. "Interview-as-performance" describes the interview as an act of identity negotiation in action. Through their choice of what stories to tell, as well as how to tell them, participants performed the particular version of "self" they wanted to portray. Their narration was a real-time negotiation with me, the interviewer, and can be analyzed as such.

Bamberg suggests that these two "camps," as he refers to them, "start from two different conceptions of personhood." "Big story theorists," like McAdams (McAdams & McLean, 2013), privilege the individual's internal, reflective process as the site for

identity formation: “sense and meaning making rest inside the person, and from there are displayed in second-person (discursive storytelling) practices and attributed to third-person others” (Bamberg, 2011b, p. 123). McAdams, from which the format of the life history interviews used in this study was drawn, is a “big story” theorist, and focuses narratives as texts from which factual information about events and self-reflective processes can be drawn. “Small story” theorists, on the other hand, see identity as socially constructed: “sense and meaning as originating in social interaction (the second-person perspective) and from there as transferred into third- and first-person attributions as in third- and first-person narratives” (Bamberg, 2011b, p. 123).

I imagined these two continuums—the interview as history or performance, and material or conceptual self-making—as depicted on two orthogonal axes, with each extreme representing a distinct theoretical classification (Figure 4). The literal text—the stories of past events and their interpretations—provide our first source of data (figure 4, left).

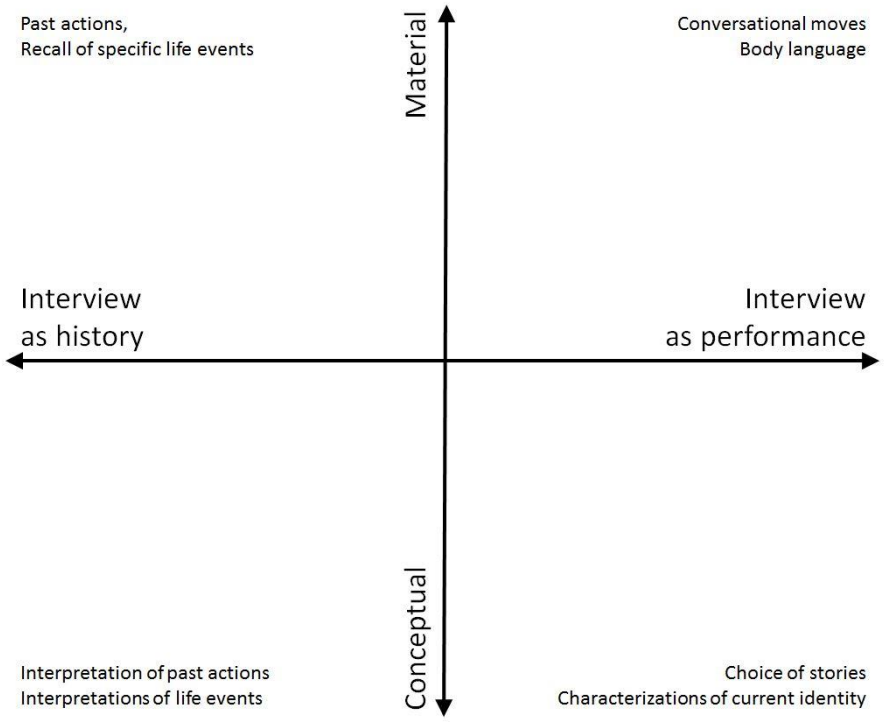


Figure 4. Representation of narrative function (history or performance) and the process of self-making (conceptual or material)

Each story that had been identified in the previous analysis was coded by its function in the narrative: to *explain* some aspect of identity, to *demonstrate* or instantiate identity, or in some way to *explore* their current conception of identity. Stories that were provided to *explain* some aspect of the participant's current identity were used as a historical record of sorts, documenting how the participant's understanding of self was shaped by some sort of past event or past revelation. Stories that were told in order to *demonstrate* identity served to strengthen the overall narrative the participant was presenting of themselves. Finally, *exploration* stories were those that lacked a clear relationship with the overall life narrative the participant was creating; these stories might have had multiple possible interpretations, a tentative interpretation, or none at all.

By considering self-authoring as engaging the world in some sort of dialogue, we can describe the process of identity negotiation as threefold: agreeing with competing narratives, disagreeing with competing narratives, or in some way modifying these narratives. Each story coded as *explanation* contained at least one competing narrative, as well as the participant's "answer" to the narrative (agree, disagree or modify). I examined the content of each story to identify the competing narrative, its source, and the strategy that the participant used to "answer" the competing narrative. This generated a list of "life strategies" for each participant, and the overlap of strategies between participants provided commonalities not just among the study participants, but with the larger population of young women discussed in the literature review.

Stories that functioned in the interview to *demonstrate* identity did not reflect a change or advancement of identity, but reinforced some aspect that the participant had already mentioned. Stories that were *exploratory* in nature had an uncertain relationship with the overall narrative. These stories often reflected the many possibilities each participant was currently grappling with, a sort of identity-in-the-making. There were far less stories of this type, and only in two of the cases (Angie and Marie). Consequently, they are discussed within the case studies, but not given a systematic treatment.

While all three types of stories—*explanation*, *demonstration* and *exploration*—provide some historical, or "literal" information, they contribute in different ways when considered part of the "interview-as-performance." The choice of which stories to tell to *explain* their life narrative reflected the "self" that each participant wanted to portray to me; the stories offered to further *demonstrate* these aspects of "preferred self" provided more evidence to what the participant most wanted to emphasize (figure 4, bottom right).

Finding common themes among these story selections contributed, in part, to a list of "interview strategies" that each participant employed.

This list of interview strategies was then expanded by examining how the participants created meaning through language itself (figure 4, top right). Specific linguistic patterns and narrative devices were observed in some of the narratives, and created meaning through dialogical interaction. For instance, Marie used "I guess," "I don't know," and "you know" as conversational signifiers; other participants did not. Levels of descriptive detail also established aspects of identity, like attitudes toward authority; Deborah's short, sometimes cryptic responses spoke volumes about her values and life strategies. All of the participants used references to other types of people as a way to characterize themselves as either similar or different; these types of references evoked meaning beyond the literal events of stories, and took advantage of the shared figured world between the participants and myself. These strategies are recorded by participant (Appendix D), and discussed primarily within the case studies.

Placing identity development: the figured world of school. As a teacher and an educational researcher, there is always a unifying question that guides my work: how can the institution of public schooling be a place where all students are supported? This question is particularly germane to the population the study participants represent: minority females, some first-generation Americans, some potentially first-generation college students, academically achieving, and often overlooked. In this case, I wanted to investigate the way the informal curricula of schools helps to shape identity:

> *What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?*

First, the participants' involvement in the scrapbooking club was examined, based on the field notes and the narrative interviews. Then, evidence of other school involvement, whether formal or informal, was identified in the interviews. These connections were analyzed to determine if they were affirming—of the participant, present, past and their future—or not.

For each participant, I linked how this involvement related to the themes in the participants' overall narratives. The focus of the interviews was on the informal curriculum, and I anticipated that the scrapbooking club would be a unifying factor across all six participants. Rather, the participants identified other areas of their involvement in school that had more meaning for them. Further, this meaning was extremely individual to each participant, based on their own particular values and concerns.

Participants were also asked direct questions as to the purpose of school, and how it could be improved for other students. While their answers to this provided insight into how schooling has helped shape their identities, it does not necessarily indicate how

school *should* be improved for students. While this third analysis was meant to be the focus of this dissertation, without the commonality of a shared experience the data was somewhat limited. This is discussed further in the limitations section of the concluding chapter, as well as recommendations for future research work.

(Re)constructing the narrative: case studies. The case studies in chapter four are an attempt to retell the narratives with deference to how individual participants presented them. This includes identification of the specific themes that may not have been evident to me at the time of the interview (see Appendix E). I also try to identify possible narrative motives within the larger context of each participant's story. These case studies also serve another purpose: to present each of my participants as a unique, multidimensional individual who is both a product of society, and a contributor to society.

Each case study begins with a look at how each participant positioned themselves in relation to the people around them. Positionality is a central aspect of the process of identity creation within Holland et. al.'s practice theory of identity, and describes how individuals are oriented to others within the figured world they find themselves. One index of an individual's positional identity—whether they feel autonomous or part of a collective, and whether they feel "a part of" or "as opposed to," is the word choice they use when referring to themselves and others.

To establish a sense of the participants' positional identities, a discourse analysis was conducted that focused on frequency of word choice (*I, me* vs *us, we*). This procedure offered a (relatively) objective assessment of how the participants positioned themselves, and avoided the murkiness of stories that described both autonomy and

collectivism simultaneously. This procedure was expanded to delineate whether or not the participants identified with particular people or groups (Appendix F). For instance, "me and my sister" indicates the participant identified *with* a family member, whereas "they [my mother and brother] told me" positions family members as *other*.

By describing themselves directly, or through the process of differentiating from others, the participants defined their identities in broad strokes. A quantification of this data was translated graphically into what I call a "positioning flowchart" for each participant (Figure 5). Like the increasingly popular "word clouds," font size was varied to correlate to the proportion different groups were referenced in each interview. Appendix G shows the "average" flowchart across all six participants, and instantiates how the quantitative data was interpreted visually. Individual flowcharts provide a unique visual insight into the participants' projected identities, and respective charts are included in each participant's case study.

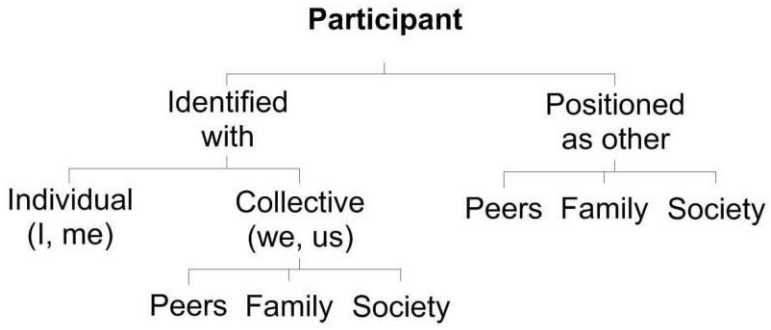


Figure 5. Ways that the participants could "position" themselves, through references to self and others

After the positional flowchart is introduced for each participant, the case study then moves to a more traditional narration intended to summarize each interview. Each

participant had specific themes evident in their interviews that provided narrative cohesion and signified personal meaning. There was never just one piece of evidence from which to draw conclusions; however, a complete list of the evidence I identified would prove to be rather dull for the average reader. Therefore, I tried to create "stories within stories" that related to the overall themes for each participant. These stories within stories are presented here as case studies.

The grounded coding scheme was used to structure these case studies, interpret different stories, and articulate an overall narrative for each participant. The case studies precede the combined data and analysis chapters, which address each of the three research questions in turn:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

In conclusion, I will discuss the limitations of our current understanding of identity development, and the new perspectives that can be gleaned from the current study.

Contextual considerations. The fact that I was inquiring about school both as a researcher and a teacher adds a dimension to this analysis that could be seen as a limitation. However, when considered explicitly, it can lend context and perspective to the study. With that in mind, I focus on two aspects of the interviews that were particularly salient to the content of the stories and the co-construction of narrative

meaning. The first is the positioning between me and my participant. I looked for clues that revealed their motivation during the interview (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; A. Gubrium, 2006). Were they trying to be a "good student" and provide me the answers I was probably looking for (e.g. stories about bullying)? As almost-high school graduates, were they trying to enact a performance showing confidence and goal direction? These clues were sometimes utterances, conversational cues, or grammatical features within the narrations (Rymes, 2010).

The second discursive aspect I considered in my analysis was how my research trajectory influenced my questions, my responses, and in turn their questions and responses (Helsig, 2010). One way of uncovering this was noticing conversational shifts. Participants exercise personal agency when they shift the frame of the narrative or the focus of the interview (Fernqvist, 2010). Sometime these shifts steer discourse away from particular subjects that may be out of the boundaries the participant has placed on the interview. At other times conversational shifts might highlight something that is important to the participant.

These two situational factors are considered throughout the research analysis, and referenced when appropriate. These factors, and my analysis of them, will be specifically addressed in the case studies.

Chapter 4

CASE STUDIES

> All of the multiply authored and positioned selves, identities, cultural forms, and local and far-reaching struggles, given together in practice, are bound up in making "history-in-person." D. Holland and Lave (2001a, p. 30)

History in Person

In the first chapter I explained how this dissertation can be navigated by using Holland and Lave's "History in Practice" diagram. The right side of the diagram refers more to society ("historically institutionalized struggles") and its influence on the individual ("local contentious practice"); this side collectively is called "enduring struggles" and corresponds with chapter two, the literature review. These case studies, on the other hand, represent the left side of the diagram, "history in person." This side of the diagram relates more to the individual ("historical struggles in person") and her influence on society ("local contentious practice").

An overview of each participant's narrative, drawn from the interview data, field notes and analysis, is presented here as a series of case studies. Originally, the narratives were co-constructed between the participants and myself during our interviews, and had been influenced by the context in which they were created. These case studies are an attempt to unite the many ideas, themes, images and descriptions each participant had intricately woven together to create their narrative. This retelling by definition is shaped by my own interpretations; I have tried to be aware of my own biases, and base these interpretations on many careful readings of the interview transcripts, background literature, and my own personal experiences as a teacher and a woman.

Each case study is presented in a similar fashion. The text of the case study begins with a quote from their interview that is emblematic of a particular theme or idea within their narrative. This is followed by what I refer to as a "positioning flowchart" of "what" and "who" the narratives were about, based on the frequency with which participants referenced themselves and others in the interview (described in chapter three, "data analysis"). The purpose of these flowcharts is to provide an immediate overview of the focus of the interview: self, peers, family or society. The flowcharts also represent whether the participant created meaning by identifying with others ("me and my sister"), or by distinguishing themselves from others ("some students"). For an example of the significance that might be ascribed to these flowcharts, see the discussion of the "average" positioning of all six participants in Appendix G.

Next is an overview of each recorded interview. Salient life events, connections and meanings are presented as close as possible to how each participant originally framed them. The occasion of the interview itself is described, and how each young woman presented herself. Each participant's orientation to both me and the interview is considered. The "background" section delineates the participants' demographic information and a rough timeline of their life events. Each person's involvement in the Scrapbooking Club and other school participation is also described.

"Life stories" recount how each participant structures their narrative, based on the study's modified life-story interview protocol described previously.[11] This section also presents each participant's general academic and employment-related plan for the future.

[11] Because narratives exist in multiple temporal spaces—the past, when they were originally told, and the present, in which they are now retold—present tense is used in describing how the narrative functions. Any inconsistencies in verb tense should be attributed to the complexities of multi-temporal spaces, rather than

"Negotiating competing narratives" describes key moments of identity development for each participant. These moments reflect a wide variety of strategies employed by each participant in order to maintain authorship of their lives. "The role of school" considers the opportunities for identity exploration and development that City High has provided, both formally and informally. Finally, "individual in society" examines some of the potential roadblocks each young woman faces in her future, as well as some of the personal assets they have moving forward.

While I try my best to represent what the participants said on a literal level, I also offer alternate perspectives based on the interview as a narrative whole, the interview as an identity-in-practice performance, and the analysis of data that will be presented more systematically in the subsequent chapters. As much as possible, I have used the participants' own words to justify these interpretations. Because narratives do not exist in a contextual-free realm, however, I also offer evidence beyond the literal meaning of the words.

This chapter is followed by a continuation of the data analysis, systematically addressing each of the three research questions:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct, and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

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oversight.

It is in these three analysis chapters that I draw across all six interviews to identify commonalities and important differences among the six young women. In my concluding chapter I will revisit the data from a "figured worlds" perspective to contextualize these young women's stories and strategies in the education system and the broader American society. Finally, I will offer a few ways these findings might inform teachers, administrators, and others involved in the field of public education.

Case Study 1, Allison

> Well, like, a long time ago I always thought, well high school is coming, and like, well, my cousin, she got pregnant at an early age, so, in my mind it would go like, I don't want to fall. And sometimes I feel like I'm too weak to come up, and I feel like I might get pregnant and get a job that might not be that good, and not live in a great house.

Allison was an eager and enthusiastic participant. Upon hearing about my study, she immediately set up an interview during her lunch time. Allison was quick to make eye contact with me, as well as with other adults. She had a pleasant, reassuring smile. Altogether we met on three occasions to complete the interview. She filled her stories with detail and dialog, describing events far in the past as if they occurred the previous week. Throughout the year Allison appeared happy and content; I welcomed her positivity and warmth.

Since then, I have considered Allison's orientation to both me and the interview a great deal. Her narrative focuses on school, teachers, and bullying. For instance, stories about her parents are often in the context of their response or their involvement in Allison's schooling. She may have been tailoring her narrative in order to tell a story that

was interesting to a teacher. Regardless, her deliberate and consistent narrative paints a clear picture of her beliefs about "good students."

For Allison, being a good student meant *both* earning good grades and maintaining good behavior. This interpretation is consistent with a larger societal narrative that "promising girls" are cooperative with teachers and successful within the academic parameters set by the teacher (Wortham, 2006, p. 53). Compliance was a central aspect of good behavior in Allison's world. When I inquired if there was anything she wanted to add to her narrative, she gave me an honest answer: "I don't know, like, people always ask me questions, so I just answer them." For Allison, this narrative of her life was primarily an answer to my question, and another opportunity to claim the identity of a "good student."

However, because being a good student was so central to her life, her narrative likely would have been similar had she been talking to any adult. Her vivid memories of teachers, classes, conversations and parental involvement in school indicated she was extraordinarily observant, and had been truly immersed in her entire educational experience.

Background. Allison was fifteen years old at the time of this interview. She and her younger brother were both born in Arizona. Both of her parents were from Mexico, and they both became naturalized United States citizens when Allison was growing up. She was living with both of her parents and her younger brother (age 9). Allison valued education almost as much as she valued family. She was salutatorian at her middle school, and had the same high standards for her performance at the high school level. Allison's father was working in construction, and Allison had commented that "we don't

see him too much." Her mother had recently found a job as well. She was working in what Allison described as a vitamin factory. Her job was to monitor part of their manufacturing. Allison reported that she enjoyed her job:

> Yeah, she says she likes it because she says she always wanted to be a nurse, and it looks like you're a nurse there because you wear scrubs and you measure temperature and that stuff.

Her mother's job was taking a toll on daily family life, however. Her mother was less able to supervise Allison's younger brother. She needed to leave for work early in the morning, long before he woke up to get ready for school.

Allison had attended scrapbooking meetings consistently throughout the school year, despite the lagging participation of her friends. Whenever the other sponsor and I presented the club with ideas for possible projects, she warmly endorsed them and willingly completed them. Allison was not involved in any other clubs, and was not a participating in any of City High's college preparation programs.

Life stories. Allison structures her narrative around school, giving practically every grade its own unique chapter (i.e. first grade, second grade). She describes her performance as a student, her relationship with her teachers, and her status among her peers. A theme throughout her narrative is peer bullying. She makes a point of discussing any incident of bullying she experienced, as well as pointing out years when she had not been bullied. This reflects the concerted effort educators have made in recent years to raise awareness about bullying and its consequences (Rigby & Smith, 2011).

Allison's narrative is temporally based, and does not have the undercurrent of gradual personal development through culminating events that the other participants had

in their narratives. She begins with the birth of her brother, and her memories of that day. She is able to describe her babysitter, who she did not care for because "she was a little mean to me." She explains that she was dressed as a princess for Halloween, and how her dad took her trick-or-treating before taking her to the hospital to see her mother. Her detail of what happened and the different emotions she was feeling is remarkable; Allison would have been six years old when her brother was born. Then, in the same narrative breath, she takes us back to the present day, quickly summarizing her relationship with her brother and their childhood experiences:

> … and after that we went to the hospital, and I shared candy with my mom, and we slept in the hospital with my mom, and then my little brother grew up, and we played, and, we're not perfect, and we sometimes fight, but we don't like, fight like cats; like, we argue, yeah, but at last we get happy again.

Her narrative continues to advance, grade by grade, teacher by teacher. Allison then describes beginning a Head Start program, and how she felt fairly self-assured. She was salutatorian in her middle school class, and she describes her nervousness at delivering a speech in front of an audience. High school brings new teachers and new classes. She describes discussing Romeo and Juliet in English class, and learning Newton's Three Laws of Motion in science.

At the start of our second interview session, I asked about her strong focus on school. She responded that "I have a lot of stories of my outside life too. Maybe I should mix them up together." While there may be a definite separation between school life and her "outside life," school and family are two complexly intertwined realms.

Her family is well aware of her school life, and her mother actively guides Allison's formal educational experience. Part of this engagement entails supporting Allison at home with homework, and consistently stressing the importance and value of an education. The second part of this support involves interacting with school personnel and even Allison's peers. For instance, on numerous occasions her mother initiated conversations with Allison's teachers to discuss both academics and peer-related concerns. Limited English skills had never deterred her mother from playing an active role in all aspects of Allison's life, and, as is seen in the literature, the investment of her time and energy is reflected by Allison's academic achievements (Suizzo et al., 2012).

Allison does not plan to attend City High her sophomore year. Because her mother has recently started working, her brother is often left alone. He has had to wake up in the mornings and get to school on his own. Her brother is uncomfortable with this arrangement, and is waiting for the day school will be over and he will no longer be on his own in the mornings. Her parents have decided to move Allison and her brother to a school they can both attend (a combined kindergarten through high school). It is important for her parents to have both of their children at the same school, so Allison can support and supervise her brother. Her brother is in third grade, and Allison reports that he is "supposed" to be in fourth.

A similar focus on family is seen throughout Allison's narratives and through the work she did in the Scrapbooking club. When she created her scrapbook at the end of the year, it is both a tribute to and a celebration of her family. When I asked her if she would change anything about the scrapbook, she turned to one particular picture of her and her brother "boxing" on the lawn. She would change that picture, she said, because they had

a disagreement shortly before the picture had been taken. For her, the picture was a reminder of the disagreement, and it bothered her.

While modesty, hard work, and the value of family have been instilled from an early age in Allison's life, it is clear that her parents want more for their children than jobs in construction or a factory can provide:

> Like my dad sometimes says, he's like, "do you have everything?" And I say, "well, everything like food, like family, and like a nice house?" I told him yeah. And my dad's like, "but don't you want more?" He's like, "I don't think it is bad wanting more, so I think you should keep studying."

Allison's own aspirations include going to the state university and "of course have a job and a car." She has two rather disparate ideas for a future career. She would like to work in the television industry as a news reporter or actress. She has also thought about becoming an international lawyer for people in poverty. Overall, though, she wants to "be happy" and "live in a good place."

Negotiating competing narratives. Allison's narrative emphasizes hard work and good behavior. She has avoided getting in trouble, and is not a rule-breaker. For Allison, following the rules and trying hard will eventually be rewarded through good grades and a good job. Living in this black and white world helps Allison focus on what she needs to do now in order to be successful later:

> Like, personally, I don't think I've had hard challenges… I think my hardest challenge is, kind of school, because I don't worry too much about other things. Cause, like, I really—my mom always says, she's like, "you don't have to worry about working or nothing, you only have to worry about school." So I just worry

about studying for exams and stuff. And sometimes I get a little frustrated, because I feel like I'm not going to get a good grade, and stuff like that.

Questioning the status quo, or questioning the actions of others, is only going to take her attention away from her singular focus of being a good student and a good daughter.

It may be this blanket acceptance of the way things are that shapes the structure of Allison's narrative itself. Many of her stories move from one scene to another, creating a sense that life is just a series of events that people react to. Allison does not display any particular personal interests, or describe times when she had a specific goal outside of being a good student. This is not to say Allison does not have particular interests or hobbies. Within the context of this interview, she did not indicate interests other than school work and the Scrapbooking Club. The connection between the details she supplies in her stories, and who she is now, is not readily apparent. Rather, she takes events as they come and makes plenty of observations, but very few judgments.

For instance, one story begins with her third grade teacher. She had heard rumors that he was "a really mean teacher," and that he would "yell at people and stuff." She dreaded starting the year with this teacher. The first day of school arrived, and she was surprised at how calm the classroom was. She discovered that, because she was a good student, that she was treated "OK" by the teacher. He was strict with other students, however. As a punishment for the students who did not do their homework, he would assign the *entire* class five-paragraph essays. Interestingly, Allison did not offer any critique regarding this "classroom management technique;" instead she simply continued with her narrative.

While I listened to her story, I anticipated a lesson about judging others or the merits of being a good student. Instead, she describes how her mother stayed up late and helped Allison complete her schoolwork. Allison suddenly shifts her narrative to the confusion she experienced the first time she saw a state-mandated, multiple choice standardized test. Just as quickly, she transitions into a story of two girls who teased her both verbally and physically, until her mother intervened.

This disjointedness may be due to Allison's developmental stage at this moment in time. Tradition Piagetian thinking would suggest that Allison is in a more concrete place in her life, and less able to see abstract connections (Piaget, 1972). Prior narrative research supports this interpretation; early adolescence is associated with *emerging* meaning making and cohesive narratives, not fully formed ones (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean & Pasupathi, 2010; Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004). Indeed, she does not link past events with personal growth or insight, even when a "life lesson" seems to be bubbling at the surface.

These developmental theories regarding identity and narrative focus on the growing ability of adolescents to gain insights and learn important life lessons. While framed in a positive way (adolescents are "gaining" skills), it privileges one end of the developmental spectrum, and ignores any cognitive or socioemotional losses that accompany this progression toward adulthood (Baltes, 1987). This perspective implies that early adolescents are "deficit," somehow without full agency in negotiating their identities. Allison may be strategically using the material, cultural and cognitive resources available at this moment in her life. By adopting and adapting an identity of a "good girl," she may be more immune to challenges to her identity that might lead her

down the wrong path. Seeing the world as black and white is proving to be a successful strategy for Allison. By simplifying the normal tumult and soul searching associated with adolescence, Allison is able to please her parents, succeed academically, and progress toward her goals of college and career.

Allison does hint to her understanding of the complexity and messiness of life. Throughout her narrative Allison offers her cousin as a metaphorical foil to herself. Her cousin is the girl who dropped out of school, and her cousin is the girl that got pregnant as a teenager. Allison identifies two possible factors in her cousin's trajectory: her aunt and uncle were not actively involved in her cousin's schooling, and her uncle may have been (in an unspecified way) abusive. Allison glosses over these more complex issues and focuses on the cautionary tale of temptation and ruin that her cousin has provided:

> Well, like, a long time ago I always thought, well high school is coming, and like, well, my cousin, she got pregnant at an early age, so, in my mind it would go like, I don't want to fall. And sometimes I feel like I'm too weak to come up, and I feel like I might get pregnant and get a job that might not be that good, and not live in a great house.

When asked if she compares herself to her cousin, she admits that she does. However, she tries to keep this analysis to herself, and outwardly avoids casting judgment or blame:

> But, I don't like, say anything bad. Yeah, cause my dad says to never like, he tells me, "never feel better than a person, because you never know, maybe you guys could switch places," and yeah, I never want to do that.

This is strategic: Allison is extracting the parts of the story that are relevant to her own life and her own potential for success. She focuses on her own path rather than simply

attributing her cousin's situation to a possible history of abuse or benign neglect. Allison does not let herself become complacent with the knowledge that she and her cousin have had vastly different experiences.

The role of school. For Allison, school is an anchor point, as well as a bridge from her family to the rest of the world. Everything that happens in her life is somehow preparing Allison for this future, even if those connections are not always entirely clear. However, in terms of school she is confident that there will be, and already are, connections between classwork and other tasks. For example, she notes that skills acquired in one class are often used in another:

> …because it [school] teaches a lot of things, and it prepares you. Like, computer class. I think that helps a lot for English, 'cause like, when you have to write a research paper or something, you already know what to do, like, on the computer, for like, different programs.

After her initial answer that the purpose of school is "for a good future," Allison identifies specific skills and understandings that she gains from her classwork. It is in this way that school prepares students for "the future," which for Allison begins with college. This emphasis on skills rather than information allows her to stay positive about school and classwork.

The two things Allison finds lacking in education right now are directly related to college readiness: scholarship opportunities and encouragement. She is concerned about paying for college, and as a high school freshman there are few opportunities to pursue college scholarships. Allison also would like there to be more rewards for doing a good

job in school. These rewards would help give students the motivation and drive to continue with their schooling:

> I think that, sometimes I think that students, like teachers should give us a reward, like, take us somewhere for field trip, to want to keep moving on… because, like, we would see other things, and that would make us want to say, well, I want to keep going because there are so many things out there.

Opportunities like field trips would serve a much needed purpose: they would allow students to see the academic and career opportunities that are always part of this abstract concept of a "good future." The participants in this study, as well as many of their peers in City High, come from families who do not have access to social capital related to college education and professional careers. While college preparation and white-collar jobs are currently the main focus of public high schools in the United States, it remains an abstract concept to many students.

Allison's participation in the Scrapbooking Club makes sense in terms of her orientation to school and the world. Allison believes that family is the most important part of life. Being successful in the future means having a good job and staying close to family, both geographically and emotionally. Family and school are both cornerstones of that preparation. The Scrapbooking Club allows her to create something tangible out of her experiences right now, and to outwardly recognize the love and support of her family:

> It's like for my family, my dad and my mom and my little brother. And then I just said thanks to my friends. Like, yeah, cause I showed it to my godmother, to my friends, and I said, just, thank you. For sharing special moments with me.

Participation in the Scrapbooking Club reinforces Allison's already established identity as a good daughter. At this point in Allison's life, she does not outwardly recognize a need to explore different facets of her personality or who she might "become" in the future. Instead, she focuses on the computer skills she learned through assignments and projects that required "writing stuff about ourselves." Gaining familiarity with higher education and possible career paths is more relevant in a school setting than self-exploration, for Allison.

Individual in society. Allison is aware of the difficulties ahead of her in pursuing college and a professional career. It would be easy for her to look at her family and her classmates to see potential problems. However, she tends not to talk about these social problems outwardly. She alludes to the fact that schools could do a better job of motivating students in her school to pursue higher education. In terms of herself and her peers, she feels they are unaware of the possibilities achievable through school: the ubiquitous and mysterious "what is out there." In Allison's comparisons of herself to her "fallen" cousin, it is clear she also fears the possibility of becoming a teenage mother. She speaks of the danger of teen pregnancy like it is a menace roaming the city streets, ready to pounce as soon as she lets her guard down.

Allison's narrative does not offer any critiques of society, or offer any particular connections between herself as a first-generation immigrant or a Latina in Arizona's contentious racial politics. When she describes her language history, first as a Spanish-only speaker, and then learning English at her Head Start program, she is both positive and matter-of-fact. Her mother has taught her to see herself in terms of future possibilities:

Allison: Well, like my mom says, I think, she says “two languages is like, two persons.” Two things. Like, she's like, “you’re worth two persons.”

I: Worth, like, in terms of a job, or--?

Allison: Yeah, like a job. She says like maybe that could get me a job, because I can help out with a person that speaks Spanish, and that can happen with the Spanish if they don't know English, yeah.

Personally Allison sees value in bilingualism both in terms of future employment and family:

I think it's really good, that I have both languages. Yeah. Because, like, for the jobs pretty much, yeah I think it helps a lot, and like, I think if I wouldn't speak Spanish… if I was born here only with English I couldn't really speak Spanish with my grandparents probably.

Instead of focusing on societal perceptions or potential roadblocks, Allison views her status as a recent immigrant as a strength. This is an important strategy in moving forward, because negative perceptions of herself and her capabilities could be as limiting as the structural barriers Allison faces (M. A. Jackson, Kacanski, Rust, & Beck, 2006; Lee & Ahn, 2012).

Case Study 2, Angie

… you know how grandparents are, sometime grandparents will tell you, oh, this girl is going to be like this when she grows up, like, she–they will always judge us by categories… even though they're words, it hurts, because they are coming from a person that you care about, but maybe they don't care about you. That's the way it is.

Angie was friendly and outgoing. She was happy to help me with my study, and appeared to enjoy the interview and the opportunity to share her story. She was also fairly clear on what I was doing; she was involved in a school sponsored program called AVID (Achievement via Individual Determination). The mission of AVID has been to help "B" and "C" students in less privileged environments continue on to college. My explanation of bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctorates and dissertations was apparently unneeded, because the AVID program has focused on providing students with a better understanding of higher education and its potential demands. That, in addition to academic guidance and personal support, helps students like Angie to construct an identity of "future college student." Such an identity may be as important to college success as academic readiness skills (Bettie, 2002; Goode, 2010; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012).

Angie offered a sophisticated story to integrate her personal and family history, beliefs, and potential for success. Her story was dynamic, and has both villains and heroes. Angie, like Allison, described a world without ambiguity. Negative choices were transformed into the impetus for positive growth. At the end of her narrative I was left with a sense of love, warmth and familial bliss. There were indications in her story that things were not always so idyllic, but Angie carefully controlled the narrative to emphasize her individual agency and strength.

Angie's stories were smooth and refined, and it is clear that she had told and retold them multiple times. Her story demonstrated her intelligence and strength of character. She was academically motivated with specific academic and career goals. She was charming and personable. It was almost like a sales pitch: Angie was someone worth

an investment of time and energy. While I may not have been in the position to help her materially toward her goals, I was part of the professional and academic community to which she aspired. Through storytelling Angie was building social capital, then and in the future. Storytelling also gave Angie momentum going forward; knowing who she was, where she belonged, and what she wanted would make it easier for her to achieve these dreams.

Background. Angie was a 16 year old sophomore at City High at the time of the interview. She lived with both parents, an older brother (age 18), an unrelated boy she considered a "step-brother" (age 18), and a 3-month old baby sister. The six of them lived in a double-wide mobile home. She was born in Mexico, and crossed into the United States 10 years ago as a kindergartener. She is bilingual, and learned English after they migrated.

Her parents were not citizens of the United States and did not have work permits. However, they had easily found work when they entered the country in 2003 and 2004. They had kept the same jobs since their arrival. Angie noted that her parents "didn't ask for the social security." She explains this made it easier for her parents to find and keep dependable jobs, despite their lack of work permits. Her father delivered newspapers, and her mother worked at a fast food restaurant. Both Angie and her brother worked at a different fast-food restaurant. Angie was proud of her job and excited to be working with her brother. She worked on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for a total of 24 hours per week.

Angie was energetic, and led a busy life. She participated in the scrapbooking club the previous year, and continued to be an active member. While she did not come

consistently to club meetings her freshman year, she had worked on a digital scrapbook independently. At the end of the school year the scrapbooking club paid to have it professionally printed by an online service. Along with AVID and scrapbooking, Angie participated on City High's soccer and tennis teams. She also played on a softball team unaffiliated with the school.

Life stories. Angie's life story is organized temporally and thematically. She begins with the history of her family, and stories of her childhood. Each chapter represents a specific time period, and each time period has an associated theme concerning personal growth. Stories reach both forward and backward in time; what is happening now is a logical result of past happenings, and is integral to what will happen in the future. I have the sense that Angie's life is woven within her overall family history, but she is also her own person with her own story.

Chapter one is the story of Angie's childhood, and how her family moved to the United States for a better future. Her family migrated while she was in kindergarten. She described the profound change this caused in her life and the trajectory of her story this way:

> When you're not in kindergarten, things are different, and you're just with your parents. You don't have responsibilities. And then first you enter school, and you don't know nobody… And, I don't know, just looking at different people and getting to know others, it changes who you are.

Chapter two is more about Angie's family, and includes a large cast of extended family members. An emerging theme in her book is that her parents are wise and experienced role models, who are guiding their children to the best possible future. They have taught

(and continue to teach) her to be a good person through unconditional love, support, advice and questioning. Chapter three marks a transition from simply being a good person to becoming a role model for others. Finally, chapter four takes Angie to the present, as she and her brothers become leaders for their new baby sister.

Family is of utmost importance to Angie. Her parents met and fell in love, but apparently her mother's side of the family did not approve. Her mother left the family and married Angie's father. Eventually they both crossed over to the United States and settled in Arizona. Both sides of the family have now relocated to the area. She details how her father's family is supportive of each other, positive, caring and loving. She describes her mother's family as judgmental and untrustworthy. I ask Angie how she came to her opinion about her mother's side of the family. Did her parents talk about them in front of her? Angie explained no, her parents don't criticize others. They have inculcated strong beliefs in their children that you can never know what someone else's motives are, and not to judge. If someone does something bad, you should assume there is a reason that you are unaware of. These moral lessons, as well as the personal life experiences of her parents, are as much a part of Angie's story as her own experiences.

Angie plans to attend a local Christian college for an undergraduate degree. This college has reached out a great deal to high schools across the area, and offers scholarships and loans to make college possible for many students who otherwise would be unlikely to go. In terms of a career, she is interested in several possibilities: nursing obstetrics, psychology, or criminal justice. When I ask her to imagine a negative future, she laughs and quips, "getting married!" She then explains she has no plans to get married or start a family until after her she has established her career.

Negotiating competing narratives. Angie employs a number of strategies to control the narrative of her life. One way she frames her narrative is by citing the stories and advice given by her parents or others. This guidance, in the form of *consejos* and *dichos*, shares the same beliefs that have been documented in other studies of Mexican childrearing: problems have solutions, people have agency to solve their own problems through communication, and that the parents offering the guidance have strong confidence in the ability of the child (Daisy, Karen, & Gerardo, 2014; De La Piedra, 2013; del Carmen Salazar & Franquiz, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Salinas, 2013; Villenas & Moreno, 2001) By referencing her parents, who she describes as good people, Angie establishes her own moral and ethical authority. This authority is born from the rich cultural and familial wisdom that has been evidenced throughout Angie's detailed personal history. Also, by using these *consejos* and *dichos*, Angie guides the listener to the intended interpretations they should make about who Angie is as a person.

For instance, a theme throughout Angie's narrative is that there are "good people" and "bad people." Angie describes how her mother acted as a kind and loving parent to her own brothers, in the absence of a strong maternal presence:

> My mom, when she was younger, she took care of all my grandma's kids, like all of them, she had to be a mother when she was really young, that's what she always tells us, she's like, I was taught being a mother by myself, with my grandma, when I was really young, when I had to take care of all my younger brothers and sisters, that's how I knew what was a mother, really about. And then like, all my mom's brothers, they all appreciate her, they might be mean and everything, but they appreciate her. But some of them, they feel jealous about it,

> they feel jealous that she was the one who stayed with the man that treated her nice, who will never put a hand on her, who will guide her children good, and… she made mistakes, but she learned from her mistakes.

Angie's story about her mother's childhood is replete with descriptions of what it means to be good, and to live a good life. Good people care for their families, are caring and nonviolent, and guide their children to become moral adults. Good people learn from their mistakes. In contrast, her uncles can be "mean" and "jealous," and represented the "bad influences" her mother loved but did not follow.

This theme that there are "good people" and "bad people" resurfaces continually throughout Angie's narrative. Angie and her immediate family are good people, and will continue to be good people:

> Like, my parents are the people who will never talk behind someone's back, or will talk about them wrong, because they know that, they teach us that it is never the right thing to do, like, you have to look at them, and see their actions to see who they really are. That's how they are, my parents, that's what they taught us.

Angie does tell stories to evidence this good and just nature of her parents. However, stories can be misinterpreted. She assures that listeners will understand the importance of her stories by offering assertions like "you have to look at them, and see their actions to see who they really are."

While frequently referencing the idea that you cannot judge other people, Angie does divide her world into good people and bad people. This contradiction is subtle; she does not come off as overly judgmental. Instead, she is able to position herself as a good

person. Her stories reinforce the idea that her actions purposefully align with her commitment to being a good person.

Being a good person, however, is not possible without the wisdom one gains through making mistakes. Angie offers a story when she did not make a good decision: she had told her brother in an argument that she wished they were not siblings. The gravity of the situation is impressed upon her by her parents, and she became a better person through the process. Without having some difficulties, Angie would be unable to "be better." When talking about her brother, who has been somewhat of a rebel and a joker, Angie explains how she has become a role model for "being better:"

> I always tell him, you're going to be better when you want to be better, you don't have to do it because of other people. Do it for yourself.

In reminding her brother of this life lesson, and sharing it in her narrative with me, Angie further reinforces the idea that she is a good and worthy person. She had also acknowledged to her brother that individuals alone have the agency to become "a better person." Through this acknowledgement she is able to represent herself as an agentive force, because she is (and continues to become) "a better person."

The role of school. A second theme throughout Angie's narrative is the importance of hard work and improvement. Angie relates a story about two of her teachers, who shared high expectations for Angie. These teachers have both caused Angie stress and discomfort, but it has made her a better student.

> I'm pushing you hard because I know you can do better, and I know you are really smart, and you're in my class because you're smart… now you may hate me, and everything, but you're going to thank me later on.

Angie communicates her previous struggles and frustrations in these demanding classrooms, but also references her teachers' belief in her, and the personal growth that followed. As a listener, I understand that while Angie may occasionally encounter difficulties in school, that she is up to the challenge and capable of meeting high performance standards.

Individual in society. Angie immediately situates her individual story in a societal context. Instead of talking about herself, *per se*, she begins talking about normal human development. She describes the comfortable and protected realm of normal infancy and toddlerhood: "You're just with your parents. You don't have responsibilities. And then first you enter school, and you don't know nobody. Just like, different people." While she is talking about herself, she is also universalizing her story, and providing a clear snapshot of societal norms. She describes her struggle, which is everyone's struggle as they grow up: "I don't know, and like, just looking at different people and getting to know others, it changes who you are. Like, I never knew it was like this, I don't know." Throughout Angie's narrative, she strives to universalize her experiences, and understand them as part of the universal human struggle.

Angie then describes why her family immigrated to the United States, again, universalizing the history of her family in a way many people would immediately relate to: "… there was a situation where, in Mexico, you have to sacrifice either leaving your family, like your grandparents and all of them, to come here and get, like, a better future, and that's what my parents decided to do." Angie sees her own history, and the history of her family, in terms of larger social structures like human migration, and love for one's family. She does not engage with a political argument about immigration or citizenship,

although she is acutely aware of it. Later, when envisioning her future, she mentions the potential of the DREAM act, and how her new "American" baby sister will help her parents stay here, if need be. She strives to understand different points of view, and, in our interview, discussed immigration from Mexico in terms of people, not politics:

> But I don't know–it's about, the situation in Mexico, drug dealers and all that, that's why they think about it twice before letting somebody come here from Mexico. Like, it all depends on the people… this is my way of thinking, like, it's not them, it's the people who buy the things from them… if they wouldn't buy that from them, they wouldn't have a job for them, and they would just be, this is not worth my time, I'll have to look for something else, that's what I think, if you don't buy it, they won't be there to give it.

For Angie, she thinks of geopolitical forces at the human level, rather than one of structural inequalities or racial and ethnic prejudices. This tendency might serve her well, by keeping her focus on the people immediately surrounding her that she can talk to, reason with, and avoid if necessary.

Case Study 3, Marie

> Well, my dad was really, like, crazy, like, he would whoop us–well, that's normal, whoop your child, but, he would, like, put his hands on my brother, like beat him too, like, put him against the wall and choke him, I guess. I never knew this until now, but that's what they said. My mom and him. So I guess that's part of the first chapter.
>
> Marie walks into my classroom with confidence. She is a vibrant person, and exudes positive energy. As she sits down for the interview, I feel like I am under

careful scrutiny. She begins the interview by asking me if I recorded her age. I tell her I will get to that—first I needed to read my introductory spiel. I pose my first question: "Think of your life as a book. What would chapter one be?"

Immediately Marie asks me to clarify what "I wanted." Marie then asks how other students have answered the interview question. I am not sure if she is asking in order to find out what I am looking for, or if is interested in how she will compare to my other participants. I feel as though she is consciously determining what her orientation to me will be, in my new position as a researcher.

Some of her responses to my questions are short and perfunctory. She establishes her boundaries and easily indicates to me when I should move on to the next topic. Other questions she answers quickly, with great detail. At times she makes many connections between different areas of her life and the abstract concepts she sees at play. At other times she jumps into a response, only to shift midway and recalibrate, like when I asked her what she thought the purpose of school is:

> School? To, ah, teach you, subjects you need to learn, as far as the government. And, after you learn that, you get a test… pretty much school is just to identify if you're smart enough in the real world. I don't know. I think. I think, so like they give you a test, and then you get a job. Yeah, well, actually, I change that. School helps you learn the basis of the different subjects like math, reading and writing.

My impression is that she revises her answer to match my expectations. However, it feels like she is also picking her answer from a number of possible responses, all with varying degrees of truth. Indeed, throughout the interview there are times when Marie

answers questions from a variety of different perspectives, invoking clearly distinct "voices" that represent different parts of her life. Each perspective reflects her multifaceted identity, which is simultaneously coherent and contradictory.

Background. Marie is an African-American sophomore, and attends City High School with her sister. At the time of this interview, she is sixteen years old. She currently lives with her mother, older sister (age 17), and two younger brothers (ages 10 and 14). Marie mentions that her grandmother, an uncle, and cousins live in the area, and that she has regular contact with them. In the past five years, Marie has attended four different schools. She has recently learned that she passed all three of the state's standardized competency exams (reading, writing and math) on her first attempt. These exams are requirements for high school graduation in Arizona. Only 66% of her cohort at City High passed all three exams on their first try.

Marie was born in Houston, Texas. She lived there with her mother, father, and siblings until she was twelve. At that time her mother left her father and moved the children to Phoenix, Arizona. Initially they stayed with extended family, until her mother could afford a place of their own. According to Marie, her mother works two jobs, during the day and night. Her mother is a janitor in the corporate offices of a nationwide gas chain. Marie is somewhat vague regarding the details of her mother's job, and does not specify what the second job entails.

I met Marie through the Scrapbooking Club, which she had been attending sporadically since winter break. At the time of our interview, she is a sophomore who reports being active in a bevy of school sponsored clubs and programs. Her long list of club affiliations includes the Scrapbooking Club, Chess Club, Robotics Club, and Shades,

a club that pairs autistic students with mainstream students. She has participated in band, marching band, and JROTC. Her experience as a peer educator in a social justice club called Stand and Serve is central to her narrative, and she passionately describes the club and it influence on her thinking.

Life stories. Marie organized the story of her life around what she identified as the main central event thus far: when her mother left her father and took Marie and her siblings to live in Arizona. She described her life in three chapters. The first chapter took place in Houston, Texas, before the move, when "we thought everything was good." The second chapter was both a physical and a mental journey as she was uprooted from her home and transplanted in Arizona. She left Houston with the belief that she would return to her home and her father with her family intact. Instead, her mother told Marie that her father was an abusive man, a drug user and a dealer. The third chapter of her story describes her life in Arizona, the three middle schools she attended, and her time at City High.

For her junior year in high school, she will be enrolled in a career training program that works in conjunction with the county's high schools. Marie intends to earn her high school diploma from Tempe High while being trained in diesel mechanics through the vocational program. Her current plan is to join the military after high school and work as a diesel mechanic. Marie would like to become an air traffic controller, go to college, and eventually retire from the military. Her plans are rather unclear at points during her narrative and she acknowledges they could easily change. She views her basic plan—to be trained in a trade and join the military—as something that will provide

financial security and steady employment. College and air traffic control school are termed as more abstract, less secure options that are consequently less likely.

Negotiating Competing Narratives. Marie's narrative is strewn with interjections of what Stina Fernqvist refers to as "social speech acts" in her work regarding interactive interviews with children and adolescents (Fernqvist, 2010). These utterances, like "I don't know," should not be taken as a reflection of the speaker's understanding or knowledge base, but rather as acts that can have specific significance for the speaker (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006). "I don't know" or similar utterances can be a way of resisting the interviewer's question, and perhaps shifting the course of the interview and exerting agency. The utterances may indicate a resistance to what they think is the interviewer's perspective, or they can be a way of establishing a boundary in the interview.

In the interview I conducted with Marie, she had three primary interjections into her speech: "I don't know," "I guess," and "you know." Each had a distinct function, like her response when I inquired if there was anything her freshman year math teacher could have done to make the class better:

> I guess she could have just, let me in the classroom, I don't know, given me a chance, because I ask for, I don't know. Most teachers have different opinions on their students, and I don't even think she remembers me, because I really wasn't there. You know what I mean? Yeah.

When she interjects "I don't know" before her suggestion that the teacher could have "given me a chance;" it functions as a way to communicate to me that my personal

opinion might be different from hers.[12] When she interjected "you know," or in this case, "you know what I mean?," Marie was more sure of how I might receive her opinion. She knew that I would agree that teachers have different "opinions" or characterizations of their students based on their behavior.

The third utterance, "I guess," tended to be a referent that indicated she doubted whether what she was saying was "correct." Correct could mean she was unsure if her response was the answer she presumed I was looking for. It could also mean she did not care for the question itself. When trying to identify "life chapters" and "significant events," she clearly did not see her life in that manner. However, she dutifully tried to answer the question, marking her ambivalence with "I guess:"

I: So think of your life as a book, what would chapter one be?

Marie: Birth.

I: Birth, OK. Just birth? What would that chapter entail?

Marie: I don't know. Ah. The coming—I don't know. What did the other kids label their chapter?

I: Um, different things, but, like, um, so what do you think is significant about, like,

Marie: Birth.

I: Birth, and where you started, and ah…

Marie: The beginning of my life.

[12] City High has what is often called a "sweeps" room; teachers can send students who are late to class to the lecture hall instead of admitting them to the classroom. This is a choice that varies by teacher. Marie, never having taken one of my classes, was unsure what my position was.

I: Yeah, so if you were going to write a book, an autobiography, what would you start with?

Marie: Ah.

I: Where were you born?

Marie: In Houston, Texas.

I: OK. Do you know the, like, anything about,

Marie: Houston?

I: Well, about when you were born, like,

Marie: No, not really. So, I don't know. So, unknown I guess? I don't know.

Marie was not elaborating on her answer, because she didn't view her life in that way:

I honestly don't know any events, significant. Like, the events in my life are really just little ones like that, like the video store, it's not like, all huge, like, I didn't get a surprise birthday party, I didn't get something crazy, it's just my life.

"I guess" became a way for her to express her resistance to providing an answer when she disagreed with the question.

Throughout the interview she repeated asked me to clarify what specific information I wanted. At times she would ask me how other students had answered the questions. It was clear through her answers, her decision to skip certain questions, and the "social speech acts" that she was greatly editing her story because of the boundaries she constructed for the interview. When I ask her to speak about the future, she assumes I am asking about marriage:

Marie: Because, I want to join the military so I can have my college being paid for, because I don't have the money, my mom doesn't have the money. And my

sister's actually thinking about it too. So we can have college being paid. And then, yeah. That's it.

I: OK.

Marie: Wait, you wanted me to get married or something.

I: No, I don't want you to do anything.

Marie: I mean like, you want me to go that far in my future?

I: Well, you could talk about that if you want to.

Marie: No, I'll just leave it at that.

She was quite honest and somewhat playful about her approach to the interview. Essentially, she was constructing a metanarrative to describe, explain and further qualify the narrative of her life she was providing during the interview.

In other cases, "correct" referred to whether the information was factually accurate or not. "I guess" signified that there is some doubt to the accuracy of the information. Whenever she gave me second hand information about an event, she qualified it with "I guess." For instance, her experience of life growing up with her father is completely contradicted by what her mother and her brother told her the "truth" was. Although she does not explicitly say that she doubts this revised history, she indicates her concerns clearly:

Well, my dad was really, like, crazy, like, he would whoop us—well, that's normal, whoop your child, but, he would, like, put his hands on my brother, like beat him too, like, put him against the wall and choke him, I guess. I never knew this until now, but that's what they said. My mom and him. So I guess that's part of the first chapter.

At the time of the interview, I did not pick up on the extent that she doubted this competing narrative of her life. By looking closely at the transcript, I can see that she is giving me parallel stories: one in which her mother moved her to Arizona for her own (possibly selfish) reasons, and one in which she accepts her mother's narrative.

While Marie would like to be in touch with her dad, she again encounters conflicting narratives of the same situation. I can hear the voice of her mother in Marie's description of how she was supposed to feel knowing her mother's truth:

> Ah, I guess chapter three would be, me growing up knowing the truth about my dad and how I really shouldn't want to see him anyway, because all through my life I really wanted to go, "when could I go see him?" and sometimes she would just, you know how parents will be like, "we'll go, I'll give you a bus card," but they really don't give you a bus ticket, or whatever they say they give you. And she just says, "wait till you're 18 so you can see your dad," and I'm like, why would I wait? No. He should be looking for us. You know. If he really cared.

Marie does not report that she is actively trying to get in touch with her dad at this point in her life. Instead, she tells her narrative in a way that allows her to voice her desire to see her father, while simultaneously re-narrating the story to accommodate her mother's viewpoint. It is her mother's viewpoint that is ultimately constraining Marie's actions in regard to her father, and she is able to resolve some of the conflict by agreeing with her mother's interpretation of events.

The role of school. For Marie, the importance of school lies outside of the formal classroom. She questions whether classwork and academic requirements are actually related to knowledge or skills she will need later in life. However, Marie finds

great values in the more peripheral opportunities that City High offers: clubs, electives, and vocational training. When Marie is referring to her participation in her numerous clubs, she becomes more animated and her demeanor more positive. She attributes much of who she is to her club participation, which indirectly is related to her mother's decision to move from Texas:

> … it's actually given me more opportunities, like I don't think I would ever go to JROTC if I lived in Texas, or EVIT or Shades or chess, or marching band. I don't think I would ever do that. I think I would be a whole different person if I was out there. You know what I mean?

Club participation allows Marie to transform an event where she had no control and no understanding (moving to Arizona), to one in which she is finally the author of her own story.

Marie talks the most about a school club called "Stand and Serve," a highly scripted program run by an outside nonprofit agency. The club is officially recognized by the school and has a faculty sponsor, but the control of the club's structure and activities is clearly determined by the outside agency. The mission of the club is to "foster healthy communities while working to prevent the underlying causes of harm, including silence/denial, oppression and violence perceived as normal, before they begin." Marie is trained as a peer educator, and refers to a transformative experience:

> … when I started going, it really enlightened me on depression, child abuse, pretty much the major—the major wrong in our world, and it really enlightened me on ways we can teach our youth, you know, different paths and views that we

> have. Why do bullies bully? Or like, why do we live in poverty, and all this other stuff.

Marie acknowledges the agenda for the club is provided by a nameless "they," but this is of little concern for her. She feels the club is run by youth, that students control the discussions, and—unlike many of her classes—the club allows her to have her own voice.

In contrast, when Marie describes the formal spaces of school, she loses her identity entirely. In describing her previous math class and why she failed, she remarks:

> No, I don't really think I learned anything, to be honest. I guess she could have just, let me in the classroom, I don't know, given me a chance, because I asked for—I don't know. Most teachers have different opinions on their students, and I don't even think she remembers me, because I really wasn't there. You know what I mean? Yeah.

Not only are clubs and special programs a place for her to explore who she is, they recognize her as an individual. It is the clubs and special programs that she expects will "help you in the future, not really as much as tests…" For Marie, the end results of the formal high school curriculum are tests and credits, two things that have no intrinsic value. Furthermore, Marie points out that the outcome of tests—whether she passes or fails—bears no relationship with what she has done or what she knows.

Individual in society. Marie touches upon many things in our interview: posttraumatic stress disorder of soldiers, the complexity of language use in alienating certain groups of people, the impact of single mother households. Through her experience with the social justice club, she is well aware of the structural inequalities she

faces. For instance, when I asked her about her race and ethnic background, she was quiet. I suggested "African-American," and she gave me an evaluative look. She replied, "Uh huh. Yeah. But, if we don't go in too deep, pretty much." Her reply suggests that she realizes the contested nature of race, and was perhaps wondering if I understood that as well.

She dislikes answering abstract questions about highs and lows in her life, but this does not indicate a lack of critical thought. Rather, Marie is enthused when speaking about club activities, and it is often these stories that reveal how Marie sees herself fitting into society. She has chosen to participate in clubs that have given her a rich perspective on a number of social issues, and I suspect she has a keen understanding of inequities faced by people who are categorized by race, sexuality and mental "disabilities."

Understanding how people perceive each other is a theme that runs through her narrative. Marie sees other people's actions as a result of their perceptions, and she already understands that success in life is a highly strategic affair. Her description of the ingredients for success in a game of chess can easily be applied to her outlook on life:

> Marie: Mostly you've got to look, if you do that, what will happen. I really don't—I just move. That's what kills me though. Because you have to think about it. I always do, like, lousy mistakes, like getting my queen jacked, like, not seeing everything. Because you have to look everywhere. Because I don't know when they can have a knight and go like, whoosh! And take your queen and that piece, bishop or something?
>
> I: So you're getting better at looking everywhere?

Marie: Yeah. Cause you're always focused about that one piece, right, and then out of nowhere they take your other pieces, like wow, I did not see that coming.

Marie's key to success is to be a strategic game player: evaluate your opponents, see what they are trying to do, and always be thoughtful and reflective. This part of her identity will serve her well as she continues to work toward her goals.

At the end of the interview, Marie underscores the impossibility of having what Erikson and Marcia would call a "resolved identity" (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 2002):

I: Well, like, when you were answering things, how much were you thinking about what I might want to hear?

Marie: A good amount. Yeah. I just, mostly of what you said, I really couldn't, well, everything I was feeling or thinking about I can't really sum it up into one thing, so yeah, that's mostly the "I don't knows," yeah, you know? Or, "you knows?" you know, you know?

I: You, you seem pretty positive about life though.

Marie: Yeah. I'm really not, I'm not really saying the negatives of what I'm saying, of what I'm feeling.

I: Are there a lot of negatives?

Marie: Not that much, no, no.

Within the interview itself, she provides an insight into the complexities behind understanding "who she is," and how that identity changes moment to moment. It is impossible to totally express our thoughts and emotions, and it can be a frustrating experience. The questions in my interview, and my position as a teacher, further confounded Marie's narrative. My experience of Marie is a confident, positive young

woman. Marie has created this school identity for a reason, and exercises her agency by performing that identity during the interview. "Not really saying the negatives" is a central part of that performance.

Case Story 4, Deborah

> Like, nobody has seen so much death as me, like, at my age… because, like, right now, death to me is like a whatever thing, anymore, after everything I seen…

Deborah was a quiet young woman. When I had seen her with her friends, she laughed and talked, but away from her friends she was reserved and somber. In our interactions I felt like her mind was elsewhere. When we set up a time for the interview, she had been hesitant to come in. Her life seemed very stressful, and this interview appeared to add to her stress level.

Deborah did come in for the first interview, but did not complete the second interview. Notably, we were not able to discuss Deborah's experiences of school or her visions of the future. The first interview focused on the chapters of her life story, and several "critical events" in her life (see Appendix E). Deborah's responses were very short, and she rarely elaborated or fleshed out the details of any parts of her narrative. Her reluctance was clear from the very beginning:

> I: So what would chapter one be?
>
> Deborah: Like, my childhood, I guess.
>
> I: OK. And, what happened in your childhood, what would be the summary?
>
> Deborah: Um. Different schools, I guess, and really sort of growing up, in a way.
>
> I: Would you start your book with your birth, or would you start your birth at kindergarten, or—would you start your book before your birth?

Deborah: I guess, like um, a little. Like around age 3.

I: OK. Why age 3, why would you wait until then, did you think not much went on?

Deborah: Not much that I can remember, I guess.

I: OK. Um, and what would be the plot summary? Do you have a beginning, middle and end of childhood?

Deborah: Um, I can't really, explain that. Um. I guess it would just be what happened to me during that time.

I: OK—do you want to move on to the second chapter?

Deborah: Yeah.

Her narrative started to take more shape when she was talking about specific events. We had started with her "high point" in life. Deborah's first response to this question was "I can't think of one." At first I thought she was just reluctant to answer my questions, that perhaps they were too personal. But then she continued, remarking "I have so many low points." I sensed that Deborah's life narrative was not one that she was excited to openly share.

Background. Deborah was a Hispanic high school senior, soon to be 18. She was born in California and had moved around quite a bit throughout her childhood. She was living with her parents and younger sister (age 14). Deborah was close friends with Elizabeth and Julia, who also participated in this study. Deborah was a strong student, and was in the demanding IB program at City High. Her friends, who were also strong students, recognized her high intelligence as something special. For instance, after Deborah took the very challenging end-of-the-year IB math test, she told Elizabeth she

thought failed. Elizabeth was doubtful, noting "Deborah is like a math genius, so…" Deborah had already been accepted to one of the state universities and planned on attending at the start of the next school year. It was not in the local area, so Deborah would no longer be living at home with her parents and sister.

Life stories and negotiations. The first chapter of Deborah's narrative is about her childhood. She references a few vague memories, like being at the beach, or visiting a farm. While she gives few details of these, her more vivid memories are of the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The next chapters in Deborah's book continue to be vague and undefined. Her second chapter is about middle school:

> Deborah: Middle school, I guess. Um, just like, learning more about myself, I guess. And then about others.
>
> I: Is there anything in particular about middle school that you think about?
>
> Deborah: Just the people I met.

Chapters three, four and five were all set in high school. She describes that she changed at the beginning of high school. I asked her to clarify what she meant, and she explained:

> Um, not really like—I always thought—it's my little world, but now it's all—other people are involved now, and there's more to—there's more going on than myself only, so, like that.

She described herself as "wanting to do this, this, this" during her junior year, and being set on those goals. By her senior year, she found that not only had her goals changed, but she had a wider set of goals. Again, the outline she was providing of her life was a skeletal outline—there was no clear theme or organizing pattern.

At the end of the interview, one unscripted question garnered a more detailed and impassioned response:

> I: So, do you think your life is boring, or do you think your life is interesting?
>
> Deborah: Interesting, as in so many things happened in my life, yeah. Like, nobody has seen so much death as me, like, at my age. For example, my sister, she's 14, and we cannot-- because, like, right now, death to me is like a whatever thing, anymore, after everything I seen, and then we counted all the funerals we attended, and stuff, and we attended about 15 so far. So, that's like, one every year for my sister, if you think about it… Yeah, so like, like me turning 18 soon, that's like, one every single year of my life.

It had become clear that she did recognize a "theme" to her life thus far: death and dying. While her narrative had earlier mentioned several losses she experienced, she had not spoken about the significance of those losses or their effect on her emotionally.

Earlier in the interview Deborah had indicated that the high point in her life was when she was seven, and she went to the beach with her parents and sister. When I asked her why it was a high point, she said she just felt really at peace there. She had been born in California, and Deborah indicated that it was the first time she had really been back. It was the next "critical event" that spoke to Deborah's underlying narrative. Her low point in life had been the deaths of her grandparents and her brother.

None of these deaths were related to each other, and they happened at different points in her life. It was a surprising turn in Deborah's story, however, because up until that point she had not mentioned she had had a brother. He died when he was 11 months old, when Deborah was six years old. They had been living in Nebraska at the time, and

where staying at the Ronald McDonald House while her brother received medical treatment. I asked her about her feelings at that time:

> Um, with my brother, I didn't really know back then, but it was sad. Um, I can't really remember much from back then, I guess it is sort of blocked off… I guess, I became knowing that, to accept death, and nothing is forever.

Her "peaceful moment" at the beach happened in the year following her brother's death.

Having a sibling die during childhood is a traumatic event, and one that reaches far into the future socially, emotionally and financially (Fletcher, Mailick, Song, & Wolfe, 2013). Furthermore, many factors influence how surviving siblings grieve and cope, such as respective ages, number of other siblings, parental coping, reason for death, and so on. This myriad of variables makes an already isolating experience even more unique to individual circumstances (Dickens, 2014). Deborah's age and developmental stage at the time, for instance, influence how she dealt with (and continues to deal with) this loss. From a traditional lifespan development perspective, at six years old, Deborah would have been occupied with the task of industry versus inferiority, and equipped with primarily concrete-operations cognitive skills (Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 2003). This may have increased her original feelings of guilt, anger or loneliness (Machajewski & Kronk, 2013)

Deborah has her own feelings, memories, and perspective about her brother's death. She has few memories of her brother, and her sister may have no memory of him. Meanwhile, her parents' loss must have been profound. All of these different perspectives are part of the narrative of her small family. Family narratives are not frozen in time, unchanging as the family grows. Like any one person's life narrative,

family narratives are constantly growing and changing as they are revisited and retold. Often, family narratives of the past become actors in the present, as family members contest versions of the truth and debate the significance and meaning of shared events.[13]

The losses that Deborah has experienced are not linked to any sort of structural violence or shared sickness. There is no ready explanation for why she has been personally connected to so many people who have died, aside from coincidence. At this point in her life, however, they have become a reference point in her narrative, a touchstone of sorts. As she continues into the future, it may be difficult to find something more positive to anchor her life story.

School and society. As previously stated, because Deborah and I never met for the second part of the interview, her narrative does not specifically address issues and experiences of schooling. When she does refer to school, she describes it as making her world bigger. The one story in her narrative that does specifically include school—when she learned about the events of 9/11—demonstrates this broadening world view on a number of levels.

Deborah was six when the terrorism on 9/11 occurred. Her family was living in Nebraska at the Ronald McDonald House because her brother was dying. Because of their unfolding personal tragedy, her family was shut off from the events occurring in the rest of the country:

Deborah: I learned something was going on but not really what.

I: Did you know it was scary at the time, when you were six?

[13] While asking Deborah more specific questions would have given me a better insight in how she was negotiating the competing narratives of family, school and society, I did not ask her for elaboration. She was sharing—or not sharing—different parts of her life narrative by choice. In making these decisions, she was engaging in her own ongoing process of "identity work." I wanted to respect that work.

Deborah: No, just, something was going on.

She speculates that her parents were probably aware to varying degrees:

> I don't think my parents exactly knew what happened that day, sort of like a week on, later… I remember like at the time I was living in Nebraska, due to my brother, and we were living in the Ronald McDonald House, so I remember– probably my Dad knew, but I think my mom didn't, because she was with my brother, she was always with my brother back then. So.

It is possible her family had been further isolated because of language barriers, or because geographically they had been removed from friends and family. It is apparent that Deborah, at six years old, was isolated both from the larger public arena and, to a great extent, from her parents.

The following year, on the first anniversary of 9/11, Deborah saw that something was going on at her elementary school across the street. That morning, her mother advised her to wear red, white and blue clothing like the decorations outside of the school, but she did not explain why: "something is going on, Deborah… wear something like that." She then learned about what happened, and why, in her school:

> Deborah: At school they were talking about what happened, so that's how I learned.
>
> I: Did it scare you when you heard about it?
>
> Deborah: It was just, astonished, like, how could that happen, you know.
>
> I: And, do you remember how they described it to you?
>
> Deborah: They just showed, like, a video.
>
> I: And like, like I'm curious as to what they said. Just, like…

Deborah: It was like a news report and stuff, like a video.

Interestingly, this national news may have given her more insight into her parents than in humanity as a whole. When asked why that experience felt so significant, she notes this deeper lesson:

> I think, just like, how people could hide stuff, or like, or how–because I understand why my parents couldn't tell me at that age, and then they–I also turned more compassionate towards their suffering, I guess, in a way.

As reflected in other parts of her narrative, the experience of grief and loss from death has profoundly shaped who she is, and how she views other people. The brevity of her narrative affords us few clues to how issues like race, class, socioeconomics and gender might shape how she sees her place in the world. The narrative she does offer suggests that, at this moment in time, Deborah is more absorbed by broader, more metaphysical questions. Ethnicity, language and economic opportunity may be less significant in comparison to the meaning and nature of life itself. However, Deborah's experiences and subsequent developmental path may have both positive and negative consequences in terms of physical health, intimate relationships, resilience and economic status (Fletcher et al., 2013; Vera et al., 2012).

Case Story 5, Julia

> I'm not trying to say anything bad about my sister, but she almost, like–she didn't really care about school and I do… I really wanted to go, and continue, like, learning, and not having to drop out.

Julia was quiet when she was around me, and tended to be fairly serious. At the time of this interview, she was a senior and would be soon graduating. She, like

Elizabeth, was a good student and had been taking IB classes. She answered my questions thoughtfully, but briefly. Unlike some of the other participants, she did not elaborate unless prompted to. Julia had been amenable to doing the interview with me, but her participation felt dutiful. She did not seem to view the interview as something she might enjoy or profit from. This may have been due to the stresses she was experiencing as she finished her senior year. She was ill during the second interview; at one point she apologized for her coughing and congestion. Deborah referred to the difficulty of being sick during the last few weeks of high school, when many final projects and papers are due. Unsure of how she would pay for college, Deborah also faced an uncertain future.

As I reviewed the transcript of the interview, I realized there was much to Julia's story that she preferred not to share with me. For instance, when I asked her what she wished adults understood about teenagers, she told me:

> It's just—hard. Especially with your parents, you know, like some students come to school and it might seem like everything's OK, they can be the happiest student in the classroom, but at home, it might be a different story. I actually—I have a,-- I don't want to name any names, but I have friends who, they have a really –they have it rough at home but when they come, they actually want to come to school because they are trying to get away from that. So that, students don't just come to school, yeah, we come to learn, not just to socialize, but we—they're trying to get away from other things.

As she described friends who "have it rough at home," she changed the pronoun "we" for "they." This was a linguistic clue that suggested she identified with those friends. She

wanted me, as a teacher, to understand that there are things that go on in my students' lives that I will never know about. School can be both a haven and an escape. The fact that school can be an escape from difficult home lives may be precisely why many students choose not to share certain details; school is a place students can go to exist on their own terms, as primary authors of their own narratives.

Background. Julia's parents were both from Mexico. Julia was born in Arizona and was 17 at the time of our interview. Her father was working as a maintenance man for an apartment complex. Her mother was not working at that time. She was living with both parents, her younger brother (age 13), and her older sister (age 21). Also living in the house was her older sister's 18 month-old child, Julia's nephew. Julia's parents both spoke Spanish and some English. Julia and her siblings are bilingual, although at that time they could not read or write in Spanish. She and her siblings had translated for their parents when they were younger, and Spanish was primarily spoken in the home while she grew up.

As a high school freshman Julia began taking culinary arts classes with intent to pursue a culinary arts career. Her career aspirations were quite different as a high school senior; she planned on being a computer engineer, and was interested in computer hardware and memory chips. Julia and her two close friends had been involved in the scrapbooking club since their junior year. For any number of reasons—academic pressures, worries about the future, problems at home or even just exhaustion—Julia and her friends Elizabeth and Deborah had stopped attending scrapbook meetings.[14] Aside

[14] Another possible reason for a drop in club participation may have been our attempt, as sponsors, to introduce digital scrapbooking to the students. Digital scrapbooking can be a "hybrid" with physical paper, pen and ornamentation. It also can be much cheaper to do. However, many of the participants in the club

from the scrapbooking club, Julia had recently joined National Honor Society. She also tried participating in Student Council but found there was too much arguing for her taste. She had been very involved in orchestra throughout her time in high school.

Life stories. Julia's narrative has one central pivot point: high school graduation. Her first chapters establish a background, and high school graduation is the primary focus of the overall story. Chapter one of her life story begins with her parents, how they met, and how they had three children. When asked when chapter one would end, she tentatively offers, "maybe when I start schooling." This doesn't suggest to me that she was unable to devise a cohesive narrative; on the contrary, she seemed to understand exactly how to tell her personal history as a story, but was for some reason reluctant to do so.

Chapter two describes her kindergarten through middle school experience. She identifies the important characters in this chapter as "teachers and friends," and after a long pause, adds "and family, I guess." Julia is vague about what is included in that chapter, other than the "whole drama growing up." Her next chapter is about high school, where her friends are the important characters and her family is in the background. In fact, the moment she cites as the high point in her life is the first day of high school. She recollects her first day of classes. She was both scared and excited. In one of her classes, she had to say her name and describe something about herself. She recalls, "I think I just said I could play two instruments, and I liked soccer, I think I said that." Julia also has a vivid memory of her apprehensions about starting high school:

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stated later that they preferred working with paper to create their products. Subsequently, we have been better able to balance the two modalities. Club members are finding that both modalities have something to offer, and the club has had more consistent participation.

there had been rumors that seniors harass the freshman by doing things like throwing pennies at them in assemblies. Happily, Julie reports that those were, indeed, rumors, and no penny throwing had been experienced.

Making it to high school, for Julia, is an accomplishment. Her older sister had less of an academic inclination, and Julia contrasts that against her own feelings when asked what making it to high school says about her:

> I guess I want to say strong, because I actually made it to high school. I'm not trying to say anything bad about my sister, but she almost, like—she didn't really care about school and I do. So it was like a major difference, because she thought wasn't going to make it at high school but she did, and going to high school was something big for me, because I really wanted to go, and continue, like, learning, and not having to drop out. Or get held back another year.

Her life narrative takes more shape and detail as Julia describes high school. She also includes future chapters in the structure of her life narrative. Chapter four will be all about graduation, the day itself and the events associated with it. Chapter five will describe her upcoming 18th birthday, and chapter six will chronicle the start of college. As a result, half of her life narrative consists of events from the past, and the other half are events from the future. From her perspective, her life—the interesting part at least—is just now beginning.

Currently, Julia's family is living off the one income of her father, who works a maintenance job. She is not sure how she will be able to pay for college, and wishes she had more assistance from City High School in obtaining scholarship money. She would

be the first person in her family to attend college; her older sister has never cared about education like she does, and has no plans to attend.

Negotiating competing narratives. When Julia does talk about her family, she describes feeling unnoticed. In fact, "growing up" is cited as Julia's low point, and her narrative is somewhat detached:

> I: [Describe] a point in your life story when you felt negative emotions, despair, terror, guilt, sadness. Even though this memory might be unpleasant, try to be as honest and detailed as you can.
>
> Julia: I think I would just say growing up.
>
> I: The whole thing was a low point?
>
> Julia: Well, yeah. I mean it wasn't always low, it had it's good times, but, cause, I'm like the middle child, and when my sister was having all this drama toward school, and then my little brother—so usually I wouldn't get as much attention. And because I'm a good student, I would get good grades, so my parents wouldn't worry as much, so I was basically more independent. At times I wish they would pay more attention.
>
> I: You were kind of overlooked?
>
> Julia: Yeah. I mean, it was bad, but it was kind of a good thing, because now I'm more independent, and I can do things by myself without having them—they don't have to push me because I push myself, mainly because I wanted them to notice that I was doing good.

She initially chooses to frame her "middleness" status as an advantage; she is now more independent. However, being a "good student" and staying out of trouble has prevented

her parents from forming a close relationship with her. In her narrative there is an ongoing tension between what she thinks childhood should have been, and what she has experienced. While she recognizes how much her parents have done for herself and her siblings, her stories and descriptions lack a sense of parental affection. Julia exists in a paradox; her identity as a goal-oriented, high-achieving, "low drama" daughter—something that should be rewarded and recognized—has caused her to be overlooked by her parents.

Julia is able to identify other aspects of her life where her perceptions are quite different than those of other people. When this occurs, Julia's strategy is to "not let it bother" her. She takes this approach with both bullies and her peers that "decided to do bad things" (i.e. dropping out, getting pregnant). Julia also recognizes a competing narrative of her in a more societal context. When asked about being bilingual, she is quick to identify what she sees as the advantages:

> Yeah, um, I get to communicate more. I'm taking another language here, I'm taking French, and if you know Spanish and English it kind of helps to learn the French. So that's pretty good. And if you know, what I know, if you know like English, Spanish, and a little bit of French, you could learn German really easily, and I think–I think Italian, yeah. So, it does benefit.

Just as quickly Julia is also able to identify the "competing narrative" that is often prevalent outside of the school fences:

> If I was speaking Spanish, because like this happened before, like I was speaking Spanish and people would be, they say like, rude comments, because they think I'm not, like, from here, so they would be really rude, and then, um, if I start

talking in Spanish they might think I'm saying something about them so they'd be like, “oh, speak English, you're in America.” So just like rude comments. So, nothing–I don't really take a lot of offense to it.

Julia was born in the United States. She has limited, if any, ties to people or places in Mexico. However, she is well aware that she may be perceived as “Mexican,” which presently carries pejorative connotations in Arizona.

Role of school. In Julia’s narrative, school is a place where she was able to be an individual, rather than the middle of three children. Whether or not it has been fully recognized at home, Julia has been successful in school and has taken advantage of key opportunities available to her. These accomplishments have allowed Julia to differentiate herself from her sister. Julia values education, and sees it as a pathway to the future she desires.

Julia has been able to achieve academically and socially within the framework of school. Specifically, school provided opportunities to develop confidence and communication skills. For instance, she relates how she dealt with being picked on in elementary school, and how the experience steeled her against narratives other people might impose on her:

Julia: Ah, 5th grade. Um, I was like, really like shy, but sometimes I was picked on, but after a while I just got tough, I got like–I wouldn't let people bother me as much.

I: How did you stop them from bothering you?

Julia: Mostly I wouldn't listen to what they said, because I'm not into the whole, oh, I'm gonna fight you if you say something about me, it's more like, I'm gonna ignore you, and–kill you with kindness [laughter].

I: And that worked for you?

Julia: Yeah, I guess, making friends with those who make fun of you or who just make you feel really uncomfortable.

Julia transformed this typical school experience of childhood bullying into an opportunity to grow as a person. She was able to then confront bullies in high school rather than be victimized by them:

I guess maybe the start of 7th grade through freshman year, I learned how to communicate more with people, and –I grew confident. Because I usually don't just walk up to somebody or say hi, um, now that–cause I knew I was picked on and I would say something about it, I would start standing up for other people…

Julia became friends with people who had similar aspirations as herself. This "strength by numbers" strategy helped her to resist the peer pressure that contributed to other students dropping out or getting pregnant.

Academics have tangible benefits as well, for Julia. Math class has taught Julia about finances and credit cards; English class has taught her how to communicate effectively. Julia's academic and social accomplishments mirror what she identifies as the broad purpose of school:

To educate students. Help them communicate with others. And just get them used to the idea of how everything else is, like getting a job, and then getting a job and going to school and working.

Julia's focus is primarily on the future, and she sees life after school as distinctly different from what she is experiencing now.

However, at one point in the interview Julia does emphasize the importance of the "here and now" that school provides many students, including, perhaps, herself: "students don't just come to school, yeah, we come to learn, not just to socialize, but we–they're trying to get away from other things". Throughout Julia's interview, she focused on school rather than her family life. While her family was not entirely absent from her narrative, it is not fully present either. School is a safe haven then, not only from the troubles of home, but also from narrative of familial conflict or personal problems. While children may not be in control of the type of family life they were born into, students *are* in control of what teachers' know about their students' personal lives.

Individual in society. Julia's orientation toward her future is filled with doubts. As was common among my participants, the future they wanted and the future they feared both hinged on college and employment:

> I: I want you to think of two different futures, the first one is a positive future, so what you'd like to happen in your life story, that's realistic.
>
> Julia: I would like to get, like, go to college and get a good job so I have like, a, house, because I've never really lived in a house, we've just live, like in apartments, so that, just to be able to give back to my parents because they've given a lot to me.
>
> I: Do you want to have your own family, or are you not even thinking that far ahead?

Julia: I think I would like to have my own family, but I don't think anytime soon, right now. Hopefully after I already have my career, I could, yeah, I think I would have a… (trails off)

I: OK. What would be a negative future, one that you fear could happen but you hope does not.

Julia: Ah, I don't go to college, I get stuck in a minimum wage job, and I have to live off that.

Julia's narrative consistently points to her strong value system: academics, making good choices and financial stability. Julia values education, and wants a career and a middle class lifestyle. This is less important than establishing a family, which has little relevance to Julia right now. As she describes the future she desires, she speaks tentatively. She couches what she says with the word "like," a word she uses most when speculating or offering an opinion she has not thoroughly thought through. In contrast, as she lists her fears, she answers without hesitation.

Julia definitely wants to attend college and build a career. She is stressed about her ability to finish college, and recognizes the problem as one of structural barriers rather than personal ability. I asked her if she was worried:

Julia: Yeah, I am. 'Cause I'm going to [community college], I still haven't registered for classes, cause I have to take placement tests, so, as soon as I'm done with all my high school finals, then I'm going to try to go to their campus and try to take those placement tests.

I: Are you worried about those tests?

> Julia: I am. I'm worried more ab—mostly about paying, like money, and, whether I'm going or not, and if I take a year off and then go back to college. But, I don't want to do that, I want to go straight in, because I know if I take a year off the chances of me going is like less.

Julia's awareness that the odds are against her seems to be the source of her trepidation. Julia illustrates a double bind of our illusory meritocracy: she recognizes that the kind of success she desires in life is not alone attributable to merit and individual determination. As a consequence, she may be less likely to find ways to achieve her goals because she already feels that her destiny is somewhat outside of her control.

It is possible that Julia's narrative will be quite different at a later point in her life. Finals, class projects, college applications, leaving friends and an uncertain future all have taken their toll. There may have been other aspects of her life that she felt more at ease with, but if so Julia choose not to include those in her narrative. The interview finished without the sense of optimism that some of the other participants had, despite similar structural barriers to their goals.

Case Story 6, Elizabeth

> I can't really explain what happened to me, but I just wanted to meet new people, because I would see people with their friends, like hang out, whatever, and it's like, I was like, jealous, I guess, I wanted that, so, it's just something in my brain clicked, I can't be the way I am if I want the things I want…

Elizabeth is an outgoing young woman with long brown hair. She is positive and self-assured. Her smile and her laugh seemed to linger even after our interview was done. During the interview Elizabeth doesn't question why I am interviewing her, and

she readily provides a cohesive narrative. There is only one point when she searches for an appropriate answer, revealing one of her narrative goals in the process:

I: What would be your second chapter?

Elizabeth: I'm trying to think of something interesting. I can't think of… I'm wondering if I should stay in elementary school…

I: Well, did anything interesting happen in elementary school?

Elizabeth: Ahh, not very, it's hard to remember everything that happened, that used to happen. Um.

I: It kind of sounds like you wanted to jump to eighth grade.

Elizabeth: Yeah, because in middle school it's more like a transition, like personality-wise. I was like, I was like introverted a lot.

I: So are you going to make that your second chapter?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

I: There's no right or wrong answer.

Elizabeth: I know, it's like my life is so not interesting.

Elizabeth wants to tell an "interesting" story. Being a wallflower is something Elizabeth decidedly is trying to avoid; while she doesn't need to be the center of attention in a room, she does not want to go unnoticed.

As a senior in high school, she has focused on graduation throughout the school year. Her first project in the Scrapbooking Club was a six-word memoir: "I'm just trying to graduate, bro!" Graduation is now close at hand, and Elizabeth will no longer be a high school student. Throughout the interview, while she still gives deference to me as a teacher, she is clearly positioning herself as an adult. She is someone who is leaving the

confines of City High and entering the "afterwards" of her childhood/teenage years. Whether for my benefit or her own, she is "performing" a very specific identity (Peterson & Langellier, 2006).

Background. Elizabeth describes herself as "half-White, and half Mexican." She was born in Arizona and has lived in this area whole life. She is a senior at City High, and is 18 years old. Elizabeth currently lives with her mother, father, and older sister (age 19). Her father works for the state university as an administrative assistant. Her mother works in security at the airport for the TSA. Her older sister was attending the nearby state university.

The week before this interview she started working, and now describes that she's "never home anymore. There's school, or working, or driving." In these last few weeks before graduation, and in the few months before she begins college, she feels "stuck." Elizabeth is eagerly anticipating the next chapter in her life: "I just want to move out and grow even more, just like, more adult situations I guess."

I met Elizabeth, and her two "BFFs" Deborah and Julia, through the scrapbooking club. Elizabeth has been in the club both her junior and senior year at City High, although she has not really participated since coming back from winter break. The demands of being a senior, with demanding honors classes and college applications, have taken precedence. The club meetings are during lunches on Fridays, and attending the meetings are not a priority right now. When she doesn't have scholarship workshops or special projects, she elects to have lunch sitting in the hallway of the Science Building, eating with her equally stressed out friends. The highlight of her high school experience has been the Dance Company, an audition-based performance group.

Life stories. Elizabeth organizes her narrative based on friendships her social identity: "My first [chapter] would probably be my first best friend, like in kindergarten, I guess. A good title for that would just be 'Alison.'" Her next chapter jumps to middle school, where she describes herself as being "that person who is scared to present and stuff, and like really nervous, and like, my hands would get sweaty and I didn't want to talk, and then when I talked I used to always like swallow." She explains that she had observed everyone in her family was very introverted and anxious, and that she consciously decided she did not want to be like them. She began making an effort to be outgoing at school. She views middle school as a transitional time, and at the end she felt she had changed her introverted "personality."

Her third chapter describes her freshman year, when she took dance class for a physical education credit. The PE/dance teacher was extremely influential for Elizabeth, who describes that she was "in my shell still." The teacher had confidence in Elizabeth and her dance abilities, and encouraged her to try out for the school's dance company. Her successful audition gave her a great feeling of confidence, and she describes the experience as both her happiest moment and her greatest challenge.

Chapter four describes the beginning of her sophomore year, which was her first year in the dance company. Elizabeth describes the tension between the new dance teacher, the older members of company and the other sophomores. She began to make new friends, and her fifth chapter features her new best friend, Lola. Chapter six represents another social transition, when Lola quit dance and got a boyfriend. Elizabeth met Deborah and Julia (also participants in this study) and the three became, and continue to be, close friends.

Elizabeth wants a calm, "mellow" future where she is financially secure. She plans to leave the area, go a state university, and live in the dorms. She is wants to get her degree in nursing. Her ambitions are realistic and attainable, and she is on track to achieve them:

> I: What would your like to happen that would be realistic, what are your dreams?
>
> Elizabeth: Win the lottery. No, just kidding, probably, just graduating from [college], becoming a registered nurse, probably after that doing some work, with the Peace Corps, probably going to a foreign country and getting some experience, and after that I just want to settle down after that, and find a job, like, somewhere in the United States, find a cute hubby, and get married, and then have a few kids and just like, live the good ole American life.

Overcoming her tendency toward shyness is ever most in her mind. She recognizes that she needs to encourage herself to do the things she wants without caring what other people think, and not to let "negativity" get to her.

Negotiating competing narratives. The focus of the stories Elizabeth tells me is primarily on social relationships. Friends, peers, teachers and her aging grandparents are all important characters in her narration. The "turning point" in life has been "the whole personality thing," transforming from an introvert to an extrovert. She describes being picked on briefly when she started the dance company, and explains how now she goes out of her way to talk to the sophomores and juniors in company. Being outgoing and friendly is an accomplishment that Elizabeth takes pride in. Risks are opportunities to do things that might negatively affect how people think of her, and Elizabeth encourages herself not to care. This transformation has been entirely self-driven; she saw a

discontinuity between what she wanted from life and what her life would be like if she let her tendency to be introverted dominate her actions. Elizabeth still considers the shyness and introversion an existing part of her personality, but that it "happens way less." It is this tension between her natural temperament, which had been reinforced by her familial environment, and her agentive, outgoing self, that is the primary site of Elizabeth's "identity work" and identity negotiations.

For instance, she rejects the upperclassmen who teased the sophomores in the dance company. Their "joking" was unwelcome, and as a senior she takes care to create a different experience for new dancers. She revels in her school identity as "One Direction Elizabeth," a reference to her self-proclaimed "obsession" with the band "One Direction." Their music is "decent music," free of cuss words, and it makes her feel "good, secure and pretty." She confides that she has a tattoo with lyrics from one of the band's songs. She doesn't usually tell people about the tattoo because she doesn't want to hear people's judgments that her tattoo is "lame;" the lyrics have personal significance for her and that is enough. She continually encourages herself to resist the tendency to let other people's judgments get her down, or prevent her from doing things she wants to.

She enjoys playing with language, and her facile use of a teenage vocabulary is a way that she performs this outgoing self. Her original six word memoir in the scrapbooking club—"I'm just trying to graduate, bro"—reflects her humor, her socially outward focus, and her focus on a series of life goals. When asked what advice she would give people older than herself to better interact with teenagers, she replied "don't hate on our music." Music, and her obsession with one particular boy band, has become

an important part of her current identity. She is able to describe her enthusiasm from both a "teenage" perspective and a more mature, critical one:

> I just like their music. First of all, I'm not going to lie, they're cute, they're good looking, and then, their music, I like that it doesn't have all these cuss words or nothing, like, it's decent music to listen to.

The music is self-affirming for Elizabeth, and makes her feel like the beautiful and beloved woman she sees in her future. This transition between being a teenager and "more adult" is again seen in the way she describes why one particular math teacher was so effective for her:

> Elizabeth: Like, I think it was at first, it was stressful, because all they do is tell you about the AIMS test and stuff, but the way she taught, and like, she had a perfect speed, because sometimes math teachers go to fast and sometimes it's too slow, but she had a perfect speed in teaching, but I also felt like I could go to her if I had questions, even if it did move too fast, so either way it was like I was comfortable learning in that environment.
>
> I: Is there something about Ms. P that you liked?
>
> Elizabeth: I think she's just nice, and personable, and I wasn't afraid to go up there, and I think it helped because she's a woman, too, just like having a woman math teacher not like, not like a dude.

This reflects a critical understanding of the socially situated nature of the course material, and what she personally requires to learn effectively. Her insight into the gendered nuances of mathematics education is somehow tempered when she describes how it was advantageous to have a female teacher, and "not, like, a dude."

Interestingly, aside from the description of her family as introverted, and not wanting to be like them, family has a limited role in Elizabeth's narrated life. She explains that she prefers her father's side of the family rather than her mother's. She offers this information as a way to explain why she does not speak or understand Spanish, her mother's native language. Her sister, on the other hand, spends more time with their family and can at least understand Spanish when her grandmother talks to her. Had I not inquired about language, that information about her family would probably not have been mentioned. Primarily, her family acts as a reference point of a familial identity that she is pushing away. It is new people outside of her family that interest Elizabeth. These outsiders are the ones who are influential, like her best friend in kindergarten: "the one thing I remember is that she taught me how to ties my shoes, that was where I learned, I didn't even learn from my parents." The tone in her voice indicates that she is subtly criticizing her parents for their lack of influence.

The role of school. School is Elizabeth's primary world, according to her narrative. For her, the importance of school is almost entirely due to its social structure, and its opportunities for interacting with many different people:

> I think it's [school] just so, we can make it, and have jobs, and make it on our own afterwards, and I think it's also so we can learn to be social with different people while we're doing it.

School is a place of diversity, and that diversity should be treated with respect. Elizabeth would have liked more flexibility in picking her courses in high school, and thinks students should be able to tailor their high school experience based on their career goals: "I want to be, like, a nurse, and it's like, basically to me it's just science and math is all I

need, and the other classes I'm like, what is this for? Credits, that's it." When asked if school needed more opportunities to express herself, she considered the idea from different perspectives.[15] Some students were normally reserved, and shouldn't be forced to express themselves or their opinions in required classes. Self-expression was more of an arena for English classes and government, electives like art, or extracurricular opportunities like scrapbooking club and dance.

Individual teachers played a large role in Elizabeth's high school experience. Her original dance teacher, who was able to bring Elizabeth "out of her shell," was influential primarily in her social growth. She admired the teacher's ability to handle her own emotions, to be kind and caring, and to push her students at the right time. The math teacher that Elizabeth credits for a particularly successful learning experience taught at a good pace for Elizabeth, but it was because she was "nice and personable" that created the comfortable, safe learning environment that Elizabeth needed to be successful. Her participation in the scrapbooking club was encouraged and sustained by her relationship with the club's primary sponsor, a science teacher. However, Elizabeth is careful to note that students need different things from their teachers based on their goals and personality. Other than being kind and caring, there is not necessarily a particular type of teacher who will be transformative for everyone.

Individual in society. Elizabeth is confident that she will be successful in college and beyond. This confidence comes partly from her experience with the dance company,

[15] This was a poorly worded question on my part. Elizabeth interpreted self-expression as primarily an outward and public act. My interest is in increased relevance and personal meaning for students across the formal curriculum, rather than promoting expression only in the domains of music, poetry and art. That being said, it was interesting that Elizabeth reported that the two academic courses she was able to express her own viewpoints were English, when she wrote poetry, and a world history class, where one particular teacher encouraged student's to share during discussions.

and partly from her academic success. Her ability to be successful is due in part to how she has defined herself. She prefers her father's side of the family a little bit more than her mother's side. Her mother's side of the family is Mexican, and her grandmother only speaks Spanish. Her father's side of the family is "white," and just speaks English. Whether consciously or not, the identity she performs for me, and in school generally, reflects a normative, white, middle class conception of the world. This has likely contributed to her success in a school that reflects the invisible standards of whiteness.

Elizabeth assumes that this academic success will continue. It is a given that she will study nursing and graduate from a four-year university. She is looking forward to living in the dorms at her new school, and talks about how her bedroom in her parents' house will remain hers for the next four years. Elizabeth does not anticipate that her parents will move, or even take down the posters of her favorite boy band that now hang in her bedroom. Her life is relatively stable.

The future Elizabeth envisions for herself is literally "the good ole American life." She describes freedom from stress and worry, referring to a "retired lifestyle." She wants to briefly explore the world and then settle down "somewhere" in the United States. Staying near her current family is not a priority. She wants a career and a husband, and sees the success of a family as depending on her ability to earn a living, regardless of her husband's financial situation. All of these things are very traditional, normative conceptions of success.

The only barrier Elizabeth identifies in her future is the inability to find an appropriate job for her chosen career. However, not attaining appropriate employment would have a devastating impact on Elizabeth's plans. She cites the lack of financial

security as the main factor that would disrupt her attainment of the "American Dream." Without financial security, she would not want to have children, and does not even see the possibility of a successful marriage:

> Elizabeth: Maybe that I do graduate from U of A and become a nurse, but I can't find a job, and I'm just going to have to get into something like, retail for the rest of my life, and then after that I wouldn't make enough money and I wouldn't even think about having kids if that was the case.
>
> I: If you never found a "cute hubby," would that be a big disappointment?
>
> Elizabeth: Yeah. Um, not necessarily cute, but, someone that I get along with. I think it would just be like stressful, with that job, and that income, and just like, too many problems. I don't even know if I'd want to get married, I guess it depends on what he's doing to. If he's like, making a lot of money, I'd feel bad, but then if he's making like, no money, I'd feel bad, but that's no life, that's no life for me.

Specifically, she needs to provide to be able to provide for herself and her potential children. She assumes academic success in college, likely because she sees academics as entirely in her control and within her capabilities. Rather, it is unnamed external forces that may prevent her from creating the life she desires.

It is possible that Elizabeth is purposely performing an identity of a confident, self-assured young woman. She may have more fears and anxieties about the future than she indicates during the interview. However, on the whole, it is likely that Elizabeth will continue to do well in school. Her goals may change as she progresses through college, but the identity she has of an intelligent, capable woman who can accomplish seemingly

insurmountable tasks is likely to endure. With such an identity, it will be easier to tackle any unexpected situations or bumps in the road.

Chapter 5

Analysis 1: Stories of Identity and Issues that Matter

> Rather than beginning from conceptions of already formed persons who are "affected" by already formed institutions, or vice versa, our approach has been to start with local struggles—that is, struggles in particular times and places—and trace out practices of identification, the relation of these practices to broader structural forces, and, within that relational context, the historical production of persons and personhood (D. Holland & Lave, 2001a, p. 9)

In this highly transitional time period that we have constructed as American adolescence, we expect teenagers to "find themselves" and find the path they will take. We expect teenagers to engage in "local contentious practice," at least to the extent that they might rebel against their parents or teachers. How they negotiate identity, the extent that their understanding reaches beyond their immediate surroundings, and the role public schooling plays in these negotiations, has largely been unexamined. Meanwhile, schools are quick to categorize students, identify them as certain "types," and distribute resources accordingly. This tends to perpetuate the societal inequities that schools have the potential to address. Without an understanding of how individuals and society mutually constitute each other, with the larger of the two changing at an infuriatingly slow pace, this laggard cycle will continue.

This chapter, and the two following it, examine how individuals and society mutually constitute each other to create the "local contentious practice" of the participants' lives. Referring back to Holland and Lave's "History in Practice" diagram (Figure 3), "local contentious practice" is the overlap of "enduring struggles" and

"history in person;" within this dissertation, these three chapters can be thought of as the overlap between the issues addressed in the literature review and the lives of the participants, as described in chapters three and four. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following three questions:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct, and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

In chapter eight, the conclusion, the importance of identity within educational contexts, and how this manifested in the participants' lives, will be revisited. This dissertation ends by looking toward the future, both the future of the participants as well as the future of the figured world of the urban high school.

What Types of Stories are Told, and What are they About?

An initial analysis of the data supported the decision to keep the interview as open as possible; a predetermined frame would have severely limited the agency the participants had to create a narrative of the things that matter to them. Instead, the diversity of themes and organizing principals in their narratives was striking (see Appendix E). Some of the participants created chapters largely congruent with their progression through school. Others focused on personal transformation, in which their values and goals gradually became realized by their actions. There was one unifying principle, however: all of the stories dealt with the nature of success, and how each

participant could realize those dreams in their own life. Each narrative, then, was an opportunity to make that success a reality, through refining an identity with which they could successfully confront the future (this idea will be taken up again in chapter six).

Theme. Four thematic categories were identified across all 176 identified stories: *self-definition, aspirations, logistics* and *critical awareness.* These categories worked together to form narratives of success that reflect the nature of adolescence as a period of "finding one's self" before crossing into adulthood. Stories were often double-coded, as there was much overlap among the four categories.[16] Stories that began describing some aspect of their present life (*self-definition*, 65%) blended naturally into their vision of the future (*aspirations*, 16%).

While the interviews could have been an opportunity to voice uncertainty regarding past or future, the participants instead created narratives that offered evidence of their potential success in the "real world." How they would attain their goals (*logistics*, 23%) was slightly higher than stories specifying their aspirations; often participants were vague about what their future looked like, but knew that further education was necessary.

Uncertainties or fears were downplayed, or omitted completely. However, participants often connected their story to the broader American society (*critical awareness*, 29%). These connections obliquely cataloged many of their fears about the future, namely the dangers that lay outside of their control (structural inequities). For example, this story unit was coded as *critical awareness*:

[16] Because categories were not mutually exclusive, percentages for the four categories will not add to 100%, and coding did not meet the criteria for Cohen's kappa measure of interrater reliability.

I: What do you think the purpose of school is?

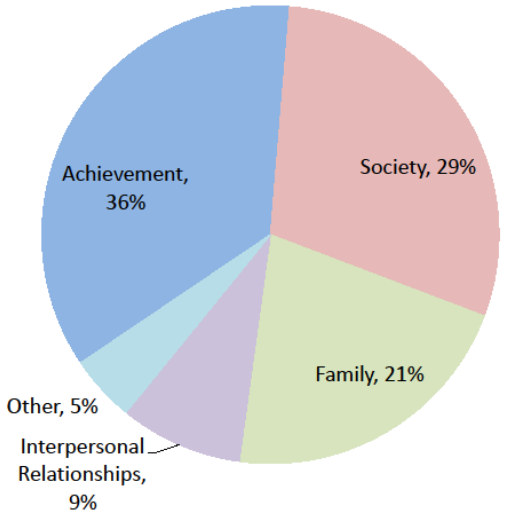
Marie: School? To, ah, teach you, subjects you need to learn, as far as the government. And, after you learn that, you get a test… pretty much school is just to identify if you're smart enough in the real world. I don't know. I think. I think, so like they give you a test, and then you get a job. Yeah, well, actually, I change that. School helps you learn the basis of the different subjects like math, reading and writing.

At times this connection was explicit, but more often than not it was implied. When Marie describes that school is "just to identify if you're smart enough in the real world," she does not explicitly comment here on whether she would be deemed "smart enough." Within the context of her narrative, the assertion reveals her moral stance: such a test or sorting mechanism is unlikely to be valid. Interestingly, Marie retracts quickly this idea, and offers the more socially acceptable notion that school is about "reading, writing and arithmetic." It is not a convincing retraction, but does indicate that she is willing, to a certain extent, to "play the game" in exchange for certain opportunities.

Subject. Next, the segmented data set was coded for content, and each of the 178 story units was assigned a code (i.e. categories were mutually exclusive). There were four dominant categories: *family, achievement, society* and *interpersonal relationships* (Table 3). The last category referred specifically to relationships outside of the family, as the nature of them tended to be more outward looking, whereas references to *family* were often inward looking. Just over one-third of the data (36%) were *achievement* narratives, like academic achievement or some type of social achievement (e.g. less introverted, not bullied). The dominance of this subject matter supported the idea that overall, the

participants were constructing larger stories about success. Slightly less than one-third of the stories were about *society* (29%), and related specifically to the *critical awareness* stories identified earlier. *Family* narratives were the next common, whether the stories focused on parents, siblings, or a larger extended family (21%). *Interpersonal relationship*s and *other* stories tended to be less central to overall narratives (9% and 5%). An interrater reliability analysis using the Cohen's Kappa statistic was performed on 20% of the data to determine that there was good consistency among two raters, κ = 0.660 (95% CI, .484 to .836), p<.0005.

Table 3. Subject distribution of narratives



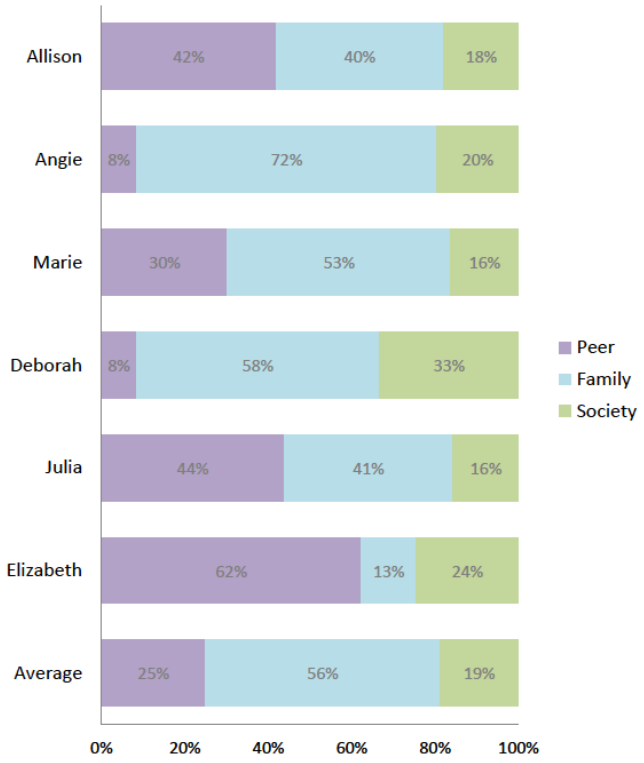
Families: Idealized, Demonized and Absent.

Family-rated story content (21%) played varying roles in the overall narratives. Angie and Allison both focused heavily on the stories of their families, and the strength

and support they received from parents. Marie struggled to understand what happened in her family and to her family as she was relocated to start life anew. Julia, Elizabeth and Deborah, all soon to graduate, tended to describe their place within their families, rather than telling stories about them.

A supplemental analysis, based on the discourse analysis of positioning words, counted each person or group referenced in the narratives, and looked at overall proportions of references to peers, family and society (Table 4). This offered a case-by-case perspective on the role of families within the narratives: there was a range of family focus, from Angie's narrative in which family was paramount (72% of references), to Elizabeth's narrative that minimized family influence (13%).

Table 4. Frequency of references to peers, family and society



Examining how Allison and Angie, in particular, view their families is interesting because both young women have similar cultural backgrounds. Both Allison and Angie are first generation Mexican-Americans; they both are firmly grounded in both their ethnic culture and that of the figured world of an urban U.S. high school. Allison's identity outside of school is almost entirely embedded in her family life. Her parents are closely involved in her life, and provide advice and direction whenever it is felt it is needed. Angie's parents have taught her how to be a good person, and she has been a receptive and eager student.

Both young women attribute much of their academic and personal success to their parents. Like other successful immigrant students, they tell stories of their parents' participation in school, through talking to teachers when needed, and supporting them at home with homework and reading (Durand, 2011; Jeynes, 2007; Sullivan, Nogueron, & Arzubiaga, 2009). Both young women tell stories of past experiences, and how their parents guided them to a kinder and more mature understanding of events.

The family life Allison and Angie paint seems ideal. Their parents are loving, kind, and continually communicate their love, understanding and support. The young women have learned these lessons, although they have made mistakes at times. Both Angie and Allison have a store of adages and sayings that they have learned from their parents to help guide their day to day life, although Angie's narrative was particularly replete with them (Appendix H). This supports the literature describing the way that some Latina mothers guide their children through "*dichos"* (sayings) to be good, moral people who respect and love their families. Both Allison and Angie are examples of "*bien educacion*" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Villenas, 2002).

Allison and Angie do not seem to rebel against their parents, or question what their parents tell them. This may be a product of their narrative; they both are highly committed to performing narratives of "good students" and "good daughters." Equally likely, agreeing with their parents may be a strategy for success: working hard and being obedient hold the promise of academic, economic and personal success.

Each participant had strikingly different family backgrounds, and each revealed a complex relationship between themselves and their immediate family. While some families were described in idyllic terms and figured prominently in the upbringing and

current reality of the participants, others families were referred to sparsely or were almost entirely absent. Some of the participants actively resisted or questioned the narratives provided by their family, while other participants saw themselves much like their parents did. Familial characteristics and the influence of their childhood experiences were linked with how these young women saw themselves; these links were strategically identified to support the narrative they wished to tell.

While family experiences are often outside of individual control in childhood and adolescence, each participant had the agency to include them or not, and in what manner. Family members were portrayed as heroes, villains, supporting characters, mischief makers and foils. In the ultimate act of agency and authorship, at times they were written out of the storyline almost entirely, as in Elizabeth's case. Absence of family stories does not indicate that family is unimportant or irrelevant to any particular narrative, but rather that, for whatever reason, the participant did not want to include them in this particular telling of their life.

Critical Awareness and Social Contexts

In seeking to understand how these young women maneuvered in the figured world of an urban high school, where quiet, minority girls can easily be overlooked, I discovered varying degrees of *critical awareness* (29%) and its related links to *society* (29%). This understanding of how individuals fit into the society's power structures has been linked to better chances for success for individuals who lack status and privilege (Freire, 1982; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Participants were aware of structural inequities that they might face in the future, like Marie, who recognizes that schools are "nicer" in richer neighborhoods.

None of the participants, however, explicitly linked ethnicity or race to a road block they may face as they seek future education and careers. The way that ethnicity or race played into societal definitions of femininity were also skirted; however the assumptions the women made about expected societal roles reflected the extent that adolescent female sexuality is racialized (Bettie, 2002). Legal status was addressed by two of the participants, who were connected the closest to their family's pasts in Mexico.

The research literature often highlights the way race, gender, or other durable aspects of identity influence adolescent development; perhaps the scientific method predisposed social scientists to try to isolate key "variables." White males have long been the norm in social sciences (Gilligan, 1977), and consequently gender, race, and other markers of difference are used to delineate appropriate populations for systematic, academic study. This poses a problem in narrative analysis of life history interviews, because this type of study structure can bias researchers to certain questions. For instance, if a researcher is interested in how African-American adolescents view racial disparities in society, the most direct way to find out is by asking about race specifically. However, these types of studies do not indicate the importance of racial disparities in adolescents' lives, or the contexts in which adolescents normally discuss these disparities.

What is interesting about these interviews in this study is that race and ethnicity were not highlighted by the participants. At best these things were mentioned tangentially, like when Angie discussed the possibility of the DREAM Act in conjunction with plans for college. This is not to say that these identity markers do not matter to the participants, or even that they rarely think about them. Indeed, Mexican emigration is a heated political topic in the American Southwest (K. F. Jackson et al., 2013; Wilson et

al., 2014; Zehr, 2010). Historically, too, race, ethnicity, and citizenship status have all provided opportunities for systematic discrimination, and consequently must be considered.

How much these factors are considered varies among individuals; Phinney and Ong describe this process generally as "the construction over time of one's sense of self as a group member and of one's attitude and understandings associated with group membership" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 275). However, in the context of the interview, in which the participants had the agency to include some things and exclude others, it is telling that there were few explicit mention of race and ethnicity and the potential impact these group memberships might have in the future.

There are two contrasting narratives that illustrate how participants situated themselves in a societal context, without explicitly referring to race, ethnicity, or group identification. Both stories were a response to the prompt, "I want you to think of a negative future, one that you fear could happen, but that you hope does not." Allison addressed the danger of teenage pregnancy, and described how it loomed as a potential threat:

> Well, like, a long time ago I always thought, well high school is coming, and like, well, my cousin, she got pregnant at an early age, so, in my mind it would go like, I don't want to fall. And sometimes I feel like I'm too weak to come up, and I feel like I might get pregnant and get a job that might not be that good, and not live in a great house.

Allison recognizes this as a possibility because teen pregnancy happens all around her; there is nothing outward that distinguishes her from her cousin, who already "fell." The

societal narrative that pervades her own understanding of the world recognizes teen pregnancy as a persistent problem with certain "types" of people, a reflection of personal inferiority that women who avoid teen pregnancy do not possess. Marie addresses another common theme across the narratives:

> Marie: Maybe I won't get through diesel mechanic school. Ah, maybe I live with my mom forever. I'd be homeless. Yeah.
>
> I: Do you think it's realistic that you would be homeless?
>
> Marie: Nope.
>
> I: Do you think it's realistic that you'd live with your mom forever?
>
> Marie: Probably. Kind of realistic. Yeah. It could happen.

Unlike Allison's story, Marie's imagined future is brief and without interpretative explanations. Her primary message is that she is capable of going in many different directions; she does not worry that some personal inner flaw will prevent her from achieving her dreams. When Marie offers the idea that she might not achieve what she set out to achieve, and could end up homeless, she promptly dismissed the possibility. The present day Marie asserts she is capable of learning and her goals—whatever they ultimately may be—are within reach.

Both stories implicitly situate the young women in a societal context, but in very different ways. Allison talks about her fear that she is "too weak to come up." This reflects both her lower socioeconomic class and her identity as a woman. If she is "good enough," she is a potential Horatio Alger; otherwise, she will be just another teen mom. Marie, on the other hand, is not concerned about being good enough or strong enough. While she concedes that living with her mom "forever" is a possibility, it is possible for

some other, undefined reason. Although this idea wasn't explored further—we cannot be certain why she thinks living with her mother remains a possibility—it suggests that Marie recognizes her future is not entirely in her own hands.

Two contextual considerations can be made here. First, the participants strove to depict themselves as capable, motivated people on the path to educational and economic advancement. Second, they were "performing" this particular identity specifically for a white, middle class teacher. Likely, it isn't that race or ethnicity "don't matter" to these young women, but rather that racial and ethnic factors were omitted intentionally. Identification of any difficulties that might be associated with race and ethnicity detracts from the participants' individual agency; while there are definite issues stemming from race, ethnicity, and inextricably, socioeconomic status, dwelling on them shifts focus away from the individual. This may be a strategy that these young women use to keep themselves focused on things that they can control. Alternatively, it may be an artefact of the interview itself, in which "claiming" that these disparities exist is outside the norms of behavior in the figured world of an urban, "color-blind" high school.

While Marie might be displaying a level of critical awareness about her own position in society, Allison has yet to reach that understanding. Julia is more explicit, not by identifying the societal constraints that bind her, but the statistical reality:

> I'm worried more about—mostly about paying, like money, and, whether I'm going or not, and if I take a year off and then go back to college. But, I don't want to do that, I want to go straight in, because I know if I take a year off the chances of me going is like less."

These "chances" refer to Julia's economic status, but they also reference her gender and ethnicity; had she compared herself to other intelligent and high-achieving teenagers, she might have concluded that spending a year gaining life experiences outside of the school environment would be enriching, and actually help her make it to—and through—college.

Other indications of critical awareness were related to other groups of people. Marie wondered about her brother and, in the absence of a father figure, if he would grow up "all crazy:"

> I mean like, you know how boys, like, my other brother, he's already acting out, like, all crazy, you know how boys like, need a father figure. You know what I mean? Their father. They need their father.

She then drew a distinction between herself and me, asking me "do you have your father with you?" When I explained that he lived in Kansas, she immediately countered with "Yeah, but you grew up with him." My white middle-class status led her to presume that my family life was stable and "normal" growing up, in contrast to her own. She did not say, "African-American boys need a father figure," but the racial implications were clear.

Marie also talked about an extracurricular club that held social events for students with and without autism. She explained that she—a student without autism—spoke to "them" like she spoke to her friends, "so they don't feel all because they have a learning disability or autism like, they're different, cause they're just like us." She also discussed various subtleties associated with *critical awareness,* like the power that words like "gay" or "retard" can have for both alienating (when used for "other") and empowering (when used for "self").

Thus, when considering the original research question, it is necessary to add some qualifiers: "What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct *during a formal life-history interview with their white school teacher*, and what matters most in these narratives?"

Achievement and Success

Stories about achievement varied in what type of achievement the participant was referring to (Table 5). Academic (33%) and social (34%) achievement dominated, with an equal amount of references to achievement rooted to smaller, local goals (34%). Despite the type of achievement described, these narratives were primarily set within the school context. The setting reflects the dominant role school has in the lives of children and adolescents in the United States. School is the place adolescents spend a majority of time, and it can be a place where individual identities are made and lost.

Table 5. Subtypes of achievement stories

Type of achievement	Number of stories	Proportion of all achievement stories	Cases in which type occurred (6 cases total)
Academic	35	33%	6
Social	36	34%	6
Other	29	27%	6
Autonomy	2	2%	1
Personal growth	5	5%	2

Academic achievement tended to mean either good grades or, in the case of the seniors, high school graduation itself. Allison gave nearly every grade level in school its own chapter, and each completed school year was a milestone in itself (see Appendix E

for participant defined "life chapters"). Others talked distinctly about elementary, middle and high school. Academic achievement varied from small, everyday incidents (e.g. getting an "A" on a test), to larger, more biographical stories (e.g. being named the valedictorian in middle school). At times the participants identified particular skill improvement, like public speaking or writing within specific classes.

School was also the setting for achievement narratives related to interpersonal and personal growth. Elizabeth divided her chapters by a series of friendships, and created a narrative of personal triumph as she transformed herself into the type of social person that she wanted to be. Elizabeth's experience in a quasi-curricular dance group took center stage in her narrative, and provided the setting for this journey of personal growth. Again, stories had significant overlap, such as stories about interpersonal relationships, and achievement stories about interpersonal growth.

Angie had a complex organizational scheme about personal growth and achievement that she returned to as the interview ended, offering one final reconceptualization of her narrative structure in order to better highlight her chosen themes. Deborah also focused on personal growth, and organized the chapters in her narrative through a series of personal losses. These losses were outside of her control, and separated her from her peers; Deborah continuously dealt with issues of mortality while her peers enjoyed adolescences centered on life itself. The "achievement" in Deborah's case, was a loss of innocence and an acceptance of death.

Marie and Julia identified one pivotal moment in their life, and described a "before" and "after" narrative. For Marie it was her move to Arizona, and her mother's revelations; the combination took Marie from the insulated comfort of her family to a

larger, less certain world. At the same time, however, Marie felt she had grown considerably precisely because of her broadening world. For Julia, her pivotal moment—graduation—had yet to come. Other stories depicted more gradual growth, where experiences built on other experiences to create one coherent trajectory toward success.

Regardless of the specific focus of achievement stories, all of them fed into larger narratives of overall success. Had these narratives been given in a different context by the same individuals—perhaps with a different interviewer, or maybe with the suggestion of a particular research focus, these narratives would likely have been very different. The context was, however, open-ended life narratives with a teacher and in a school setting. The result was narratives that revolved around success: successes already achieved, and successes yet to come.

This focus on achievement, in both the past and the future, is not unexpected; the accepted notion of "adolescence" is a period of time geared toward making life decisions that will determine the future (Eccles, 2009; Phinney et al., 2001). For lower-income minority students, whose families see education as the most accessible way toward middle class, adolescence carries even more import (Enriquez, 2011; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Phinney et al., 2001). Schools reinforce this belief, often with education constructed as the only way to achieve what Elizabeth referred to as "the good 'ole American Dream" (M. M. Holland, 2015; Rosenbaum, 2011). This concept has even been solidified through proposed legislation with the "DREAM" Act, as Angie relates: "you get permission to be here, if you don't get it you go back to Mexico. We have the DREAM Act, that's the good thing." For Angie, like many other undocumented adolescents, the DREAM Act holds both the key to education, and the only way her

academic plans and career goals are even relevant (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2011; Pang et al., 2010; Rosenbaum, 2011).

Not all of the participants were fixated on a four year degree, however. Marie, while at times considering the possibility of attending college someday, has not built her future around that idea. While she is a good student, she has not tried to remake herself into an "ideal student." The narrow focus of today's high school curriculum, with its emphasis on decontextualized knowledge and endless tests, has frustrated Marie:

> See, you can't even do what you want to do in math, how is, like a math test going to help you in the future, what if you don't even want to go to college, I don't understand that. You have to have—why do you have to have credits, a certain amount of credits, can't we just, like, do what we can. I don't know. School.

At one point the idea of being a medical examiner had interested her, but she dismisses it now because it would require too much schooling: "but it would take a lot of knowledge, school, time I don't have. That's too much." Paradoxically, because Marie sees school as a place to learn decontextualized, endless information, the idea of more school—even if it were to prepare her to do something interesting like to "cut people open, and to examine the body parts,"—is unfathomable.

Still, even with her insistence on trade school and the military, Marie also has an inclination to go to college, although it is not connected to any sort of future career or possible interests. Primarily, she mentions it in terms of affordability: "Because, I want to join the military so I can have my college being paid for, because I don't have the money, my mom doesn't have the money." It is particularly interesting that Marie does

not connect possible college attendance with any future plans; she had many ideas about possible jobs, and describes in detail what training she would need. College, the great unknown, is of questionable value, but has value nonetheless.

Chapter 6

Analysis 2: Negotiating Competing Narratives

From a sociocultural perspective, inherent in the creation of an identity—or rather, identities—is dialogism (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Hermans, 2001, 2004; D. Holland & Lave, 2001a). In creating a sense of ourselves in the world, we engage in countless dialogues and conversations. These dialogues can be with others—people in our midst that we interact with and react to. The others can also be the imagined figures that reflect "stock characters" from our figured worlds; though imaginary, these others can still have perceived biases, ideas, and even power. Finally, we dialogue with ourselves, at times arguing, at other times agreeing. It is through these endless dialogues that "history-in-person" is made (D. Holland & Lave, 2001a).

Identity negotiation is this process of responding to the world—individuals can agree, disagree, or modify the positioning offered through dialogues. Negotiation, in turn, defines the self, and is the basis for the second research question:

> How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?

Drawing from Holland et. al., and Urrieta, I use dual concepts of material and conceptual processes for this self-authoring (D. Holland & Lave, 2001b; D. Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta Jr, 2007; Urrieta, 2007). Identity work can describe a teenager distinguishing, whether to others or to herself, between the narratives of her family and the way she

wants to be seen (conceptual). Identity work can also describe an adolescent's careful participation in a mathematics classroom as she struggles between fitting in with friends and achieving academically (material).

In addition to the distinction between conceptual and material, the interviews can also be examines as both historical records and performances of identity. These categories map to Bamberg, et. al.'s formulation of "big stories" and "small" stories (Bamberg, 2011a, 2011b; Freeman, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2006b). When taken altogether, the distinction between material and conceptual processes, and treating the interview as either history or performance, create four distinct ways in which identity is created through dialogue. I visualize these four categories as on two orthogonal axes, as described in the methodology (figure 4, chapter 3).

Literal, historical narratives are both recollections of past actions (material processes[17], top left) and the simultaneous framing of them in a meaningful context (conceptual process, bottom left). Conversational "moves" like interrupting, qualifying statements, or steering the conversation correspond to the material processes of self-making (top right). A performance of identity, on the other side of the horizontal continuum, is what happens in "real time." The selection of stories to tell, and how to tell them, reflect the participants' conceptual processes in action (bottom right).

This chapter first focuses on literal, historic readings of the interview transcripts and the concomitant interpretations that participants offer for these past events. Then I shift to the participant's performance of identity during the interview itself. While this

[17] The recollection of past actions and events is technically conceptual, since every retelling is simultaneously an interpretation. However, for the purposes of this analysis, we are interested in the actions and events as material processes, and accept this as an unavoidable limitation.

division provides a convenient way to conceptualize the different ways the same interview data can be treated, it should be noted that there is overlap between the material and the conceptual, performance and interpretation. It is through these two complementary approaches that the participants establish themselves as competent young women capable of overcoming life's obstacles through their life interview.

What is striking about the narratives, as a collection, is the wide variety that any particular strategy—material or conceptual—was utilized (Appendices F and G). While these young women had some commonalities in their family background or socioeconomic status, the specifics of their lives were as variable as their unique goals and personalities.

Interview-as-History: Conceptual Self-Making

The beauty of Holland's social practice theory of identity is the universal possibility of individual agency. While it is easy to see the limitations that society places on the individual, a closer investigation reveals the personal agency and self-determination all people possess, no matter what the circumstances. Everywhere there are choices, however limited, for how to act and how to interpret. For each participant, this personal agency is uniquely wrapped up in an overall life narrative that consists of both actions and interpretations of those actions. While everyday life may seem prescribed and predetermined (like Elizabeth's comment, "my life is *so* not interesting!"), interpretations of everyday life are not; it is through interpretation that individuals are able to soar beyond the everyday boundaries imposed by figured worlds.

Identity is not a destination. All of the participants related at least one story evidencing the "identity achievement" that Erikson and Marcia described. All of the

participants could be described as reflective and curious young women with strong values, beliefs, and goals. However, the notion that identity development is a linear path, and is something that will be achieved (before adulthood, even), is a narrow conceptualization that ignores the complexity of individual agency.

Some stories did recount times when participants struck out on their own, committing to one particular worldview or idea. For instance, when Elizabeth examined her family, she determined they were "introverted" and "always anxious and stuff;" she knew she wanted something else in life. She recalls, "I guess it's just something like, on my own, I was just like, OK, I don't want to be like them." As a culture, there is a general sense that teenagers should be asserting themselves like Elizabeth did, "exploring" and "committing" to their own set of values. Marcia's very word choice for his four identity statuses reflects this societal narrative: "achievement" reflects what psychologically healthy teenagers do, whereas anything else has negative connotations (i.e. moratorium, foreclosure and diffusion). Marcia goes so far as to describe foreclosed individuals, in particular, as victims; foreclosure is the individual's way of steeling herself against "the expected emotional price of exploration" after being "punished or discouraged" (Marcia, 2002, p. 13).

It did appear at times, on the surface, that some of the participants were in a state of "foreclosure," adopting a view or an attitude without believing it or making it their own. For instance, while Marie hinted at a range of different possibilities, she often adopted interpretations of past events that aligned with those of people in authority. When describing a time she struggled to learn, she described one particular math class,

and volunteered an explanation immediately: “I was always late and I never did the homework.”

This initial explanation of why she failed is exactly the way teachers would view the situation. When I asked her “what could have been different to make it better” she focused on her own shortcomings, and used words like “procrastination” and “tardiness.” Finally, when I specifically asked if the teacher could have done something different, she suggested the teacher could have “given me a chance,” adding, as a matter of fact, “most teachers have different opinions on their students.” High school is what high school has always been, Marie seemed to be saying, and there is no point in expecting the teachers to change.

While Marcia might suggest this reflects a universal attitude of non-exploration, or an unquestioning belief in the values of authority figures, there is another explanation for what appears to be “foreclosure.” Adopting the prevailing narrative may simply be easier: “if you can’t change them, join them.” Whether just “playing the game,” or truly believing in the game itself, the participants themselves were making choices, and these contentious struggles may not always be evident to an outsider. Further, these choices do not necessarily define who they “are,” but rather, it defines the narrative they wish to tell in this particular context.

Strategies and participants: infinite possibilities. A list of strategies each young woman referred to during their narrative was generated based on a close contextual reading of the interview transcripts (Appendix H). When their personal sense of identity conflicted with narratives from their peers, family, teachers or society, they referenced both explicit strategies (e.g. Julia’s “I’m gonna ignore you, and—kill you with

kindness") and more general guiding adages and maxims (e.g. Angie's "at last, you laugh at the end"). At times I could image some parental figure reassuring them with words of comfort and support; now these young women were repeating them like mantras as they met life's various challenges.

For instance, Allison and Angie offered many such interpretive statements that reflected their rich value system. "Always ask why they are doing this," and "never feel better than a person, because you never know, maybe you guys could switch places," are two such "life lessons" out of many that reflect both humility and acceptance of others (said by, respectively, Angie and Allison). "Just do it," on the other hand, is an expression born from an advertising slogan decades ago, and is Elizabeth's mantra to support a path that greatly diverges from her family.

At other times I heard their own voices, with their unique life observations being woven into the narratives provided by others. Deborah, in particular, offered this observation of her parents:

> I think, just like, how people could hide stuff, or like, or how—because I understand why my parents couldn't tell me at that age, and then they—I also turned more compassionate towards their suffering, I guess, in a way.

Deborah's experience diverged greatly from the typical figured world of high school; her sparse observations might reflect the fact that her everyday life did not conform to the normative scripts of her peers.

Along with their verbalized strategies, there were strategies that were left unstated, but could be extracted from the content of the narratives. In other words, by looking at specific strategies of action, patterns, or the participant's framing of events,

there were other strategies that could be deduced. Returning to Marie's narrative, we can see that this strategy of "foreclosure," as described above, is repeated in many different contexts. Marie struggled to reconcile her mother's version of Marie's childhood with her own memories of a happy life and a loving father. At times she voiced her resistance, but overall seemed to accept her mother's narrative of events.

This acquiescence appears strategic; while Marie already has doubts, she is also living with her mother and, essentially, her mother's narrative. Agreement is a logical choice. It serves to keep the family peace and allows her to focus on other parts of life. When she finishes high school and becomes self-supporting, Marie will be free to seek out her father without needing to directly challenge her mother's narrative. Challenging her mother might make life very difficult, and she is already struggling to make sense of a complicated world. Thus, by adopting other people's narratives, she is able to navigate the world around her with a sense of control over the amount of turbulence.

Julia's narrative offers another example of a common strategy that goes unstated, but is central to all individuals: building off of the past. At different times in life, people use their previous conceptualizations of self to help them create a new future. In the past, one of Julia's strategies has been to work hard at a few select things. She has focused on schoolwork and on music. By concentrating on a few areas, she can excel. This strategy has helped her allay the sense of "middleness" she feels at home. Consequentially her school participation, overall, has been concerted rather than exploratory. For instance, Julia had been in culinary arts classes, but as her career focus shifted, she stopped taking those classes. While this strategy has worked for her in the past, she now recognizes the

need to shift focus. When Julia elaborates on the multitude of choices and possible futures she encountered in high school, she talks about lost opportunities:

> Sometimes it makes me feel lost. I kind of look back and sometimes I regret some choices. Like I could have done this, but I did something else, so I don't think I got like a good experience, maybe. And, like in middle school I decided to leave—I was playing one instrument, and I decided to play another instrument, so I had two orchestra classes, so I couldn't get any other elective, or like workshops—I just stuck to one thing and I kind of wish I didn't, cause I would be able to do other things that I like to.

It seems that Julia is at a point in life when she is reconsidering her current strategies, and deciding how to approach her future. Going forward Julia wants to expand her world, not just survive it. By reframing the past, Julia is authoring a future self that will make different choices in the future.

These deduced strategies (Appendices D and I) and the explicitly stated strategies (Appendix H) are discussed in greater detail in the case studies and throughout the analysis/discussion chapters.

Interview-as-Performance: Material Self-Making

While narratives ostensibly give us a record of events (albeit with varying degrees of accuracy), an interpretive framework and a running commentary, the occasion of the narrative itself provides evidence of the real-time strategies that people use to establish their identities. From a conceptual point of view, identity is created through participants' choices about what stories to include in their narrative, and how to present these stories. The interview topics, like dividing one's life into chapters or describing a "high point," is

going to take shape differently whether talking to friends, parents, children, or romantic partners. The way the interview progresses is equally dependent on how the participant and the interviewer interact with each other: a power differential might constrain the interviewee, while a meshing of personalities might co-produce a narrative with rich description and reflection. An interview is more than just words, or word choice; it is an active process of give and take between two people. The expression on one person's face might indicate disapproval, while dismissing disapproval through humor is strategic way to "defend" some aspect of identity. These material processes of identity production unite the many possibilities of the figured world with the particular positionings associated with the context of the interview itself.

Creating identity through categorization. Considering the interviews as performances, the choice of what stories to tell is a conceptual way individuals create identity. Angie and Allison chose to tell stories about their families, and how their families were responsible for making them academically successful and morally upstanding young women. Both of them included a story about when they disappointed themselves or their parents by treating a sibling harshly; these stories of poor behavior reflect that they recognize a different way of life is possible (i.e. not putting family first), and that they have rejected that path in favor of their current identity. The choice of stories to tell is reflected in their chapters and the overall "theme" of their narratives (Appendix E); these themes are discussed individually within the case studies. However, story choice is just one way to create identity. The way that we choose to tell stories can be just as important.

We often think of stories as a series of events that have a beginning, middle and end. Just as important as these events, meaning in stories is created through simple characterizations. How we describe ourselves and how we describe others can tell a story in much the same way as a memorable photograph. Descriptions can be reflexive, describing either individual or group identification. Descriptions can also categorize others, and in so doing, define ourselves (Jenkins, 2000).

Whether or not participants tended to talk about their lives as an individual (e.g. I, me) or as part of group (e.g. we, us) was one way of creating identity, and reflected themes of autonomy or collectivity. For instance, Julia, Deborah and Elizabeth, who were all seniors poised to set off into the world on their own, on average had a larger percentage of references to themselves as individuals (50%). This may reflect their core dispositions, but it may also reflect the imminent necessity of self-redefinition as they leave their high school identities behind. Allison, Angie and Marie, who were early in their high school career, were less likely to refer to themselves as individuals (30%). Instead they identified more with groups of belonging: nuclear families, clubs, friendship groups, etc. In terms of what groups they identified with, again, there was a large range among participants. Allison and Angie were family oriented, and the value of family connections was central to their overall narrative. Marie, on the other hand, was quite conflicted about her parents, and often identified with a club or "type" of person. For instance, in describing her desire to join the military, she drew a distinction between the group she identified with, and everyone else:

> I find that exciting, you know having a—going out to war, defending what you think is, what you, you know, the country. Without us, our whole country would be in pieces, wouldn't it? If we didn't fight for you guys?

Here, Marie has cast herself as part of a group dedicated to the security of others; all at once she is selfless, brave, a team player, and some who takes responsibility. Again, without longitudinal data it is impossible to know how much of this tendency toward individuation or collectivism is due to enduring personality traits or the nature of their position in high school. I suspect it is a combination of both, contributing to the dynamic and ever-changing nature of personal identity.

Textual evidence offered a more detailed understanding of each participant and their practices of identity negotiation. For instance, a characterization that Allison made of herself and her brother produced a description of themselves, their relationship and what they value:

> We're not perfect, and we sometimes fight, but we don't like, fight like cats, like we argue, yeah, but at last we get happy again.

Likewise, categorizing others tells just as much about the identity of the speaker, as in a comment Allison made about a classmate:

> I always sat down with this boy named Jordan, and he was really bad, like, right now I think he doesn't even go to school that I know, 'cause in my eighth grade class I heard that he was on drugs and stuff, doing drugs. I'm like, that's not new, because I knew him since almost kinder, and he was like, bad and stuff.

It is clear that Allison does not condone drug use or dropping out of school, and that neither of these scenarios would apply to her own life. Even if the participants had been

asked very specific questions about their past—something that I had avoided in the interview, in order to give participants maximum freedom to create their own narrative—they still would have had agency in *how* to respond, and what to emphasize.

Ways to "answer" the world. Part of what has been criticized about narrative research is that it is highly dependent on the interviewer: their position with respect to the participant (equal status, with no relationship to "everyday" life), their personality (friendly, but not overpowering), and their ability to respond to the participant nonjudgmentally. Yet this sort of ideal interviewer cannot exist; people do not exist in a vacuum, and neither do narratives. The participants in this study were talking to a teacher at their school. I have a degree of power in my position, although that was not necessarily an issue for these young women. Other factors that might have been more relevant are my position as a mandatory reporter of child abuse, my relationships with other teachers that they may be close to or depend upon, or the idea that I would take their stories and use them in an amorphous and abstract research project.

With this agency to tell their story largely in their own way, they most often portrayed their selves in a positive light. Consequently, I was probably not privy to many mistakes or regrets they may have experienced, nor made aware of perceived shortcomings or failures. These participants may have chosen to enact an identity that they found intriguing or entertaining, either to themselves or to me. They may have been practicing a new and emerging identity, or they may have been honing a polished presentation of themselves. My position as a teacher does not make their stories less trustworthy; however, it does provide a frame that needs to be considered.

Elizabeth's "turning point" story reflects this dual purpose of identity performance; namely, to provide evidence of their chosen identity to both their audience and their selves:

> Turning point, let's see. Like, the only thing that's really come to mind is the whole personality thing, just like going from an introverted, shy person to someone who is outgoing, in three, not even, two years, just like, it's just crazy.

This turning point memory underscores Elizabeth's projected image as a strong, confident, outgoing young woman. She establishes that this personality change is indeed permanent: this is who she is now. However, Elizabeth does not dismiss "who" she was previously; her identity as a shy and withdrawn introvert lingers in the background:

> It's like the only person I ever wanted to be like is like myself, because that's what I was comfortable with… So I guess it's just, not my whole personality changed, because I still get like that sometimes, but it happens way less…

While establishing that there is nothing inherently wrong with shyness, she reminds herself why she wanted to change:

> it's just something in my brain clicked, I can't be the way I am if I want the things I want… I'm OK with just going up and talking to someone, I might freak them out, but I'd rather be, like, have them freaked out than me having said, "Oh, I wish I had talked to them."

Narratives, then, can be used to portray a particular version of self to others, and also to reinforce it in our own lives, so that we are not slaves to our predispositions.

Reading the interviews as a text, I identified specific ways that the participants created the "identity" that they enacted during the interview. For instance, Angie

provided detailed stories with specific interpretations. She begins her narrative on her family's migration to the United States by grounding it in familial love and strong values: "First was my dad, he decided to come over here, to help us out, so his children would get something better than what he and my mom didn't get." At the end of the interview, while walking out the door of the classroom, she rearticulates this important theme, summarizing "chapter one should be why I came here… yeah, it was to get a better future, and how it all started in kindergarten, and my family…see you later!" Elizabeth, too, had a strong interpretive framework for her narrative, clearly articulating the importance of friends; within the first few questions she established when, why and how she was able to transform herself from an "introvert" to an "extrovert."

In contrast, Allison's narrative often strayed off track, sometimes the thread of her thinking somewhat unclear. In relating that a teacher wanted her to skip a grade early in elementary school, she explains that "I did want to move and at the same time I didn't, because there was a time when I was in that class and there was this boy, he brought like, toys for everybody, and there was a doll, and I was playing with it, but I guess I accidentally ripped off the leg, and he was really mad at me…" Throughout her interview the themes of bullying, getting in trouble, and excelling in school were evident by the sheer number of stories about these things, but there was little interpretive framework stated to tie them all together.

Some of the ways that participants created meaning in their narrative related to the actual "give and take" of the interview. Marie had a number of verbal signifiers that established limits to the interview; some were subtle, like stating, "you know," or "I don't know," and some were quite literal, like an abrupt "next question!" Many of these verbal

signifiers also conveyed doubt, layers of meaning, and the existence of many interpretive possibilities. In doing so, she left her "identity" largely undefined, open to changes and unable to be pinned down. On the opposite side of the continuum, Deborah's response were short, perfunctory, and left little room to ask follow up questions. In effect, Deborah fulfilled her perceived obligation to participate in the interview, but was able to establish herself as a private person; like Marie, Deborah also left her "identity" undefined and open.

This "give and take" of the interview process was also a vehicle for the participants to gather information, and at times advance their own goals or identity understanding. For instance, Allison ended the interview with a brief recap, explaining "I don't know, like, people always ask me questions, so I just answer them. Yeah. I really enjoy school. I don't know what I'm going to do during the summer. Because I don't have summer school or nothing." She adds that she tried to apply to a summer program "Compugirls," but had not received any reply.[18] This last comment was framed in a way that invited suggestions or possible explanations, in effect accessing the social capital that I represented:

> Yeah, but, they never called me. I turned in the form, yeah, and I turned it in to the office, yeah, but they kept calling, they kept saying, oh, you need to call this number, and I called but they never answered, so, I don't know.

In fact, I did have some insight into the program she was interested, and was able to offer her the name and contact information of the coordinator of the program.

[18] The program "Compugirls" was earlier in the literature review (chapter 2), in the section "Educational Contexts: Why Identity Matters."

Based on the themes, and how the participants created meaning in their narrative, a list of "interview strategies" was generated (Appendix D). These interview strategies, much like "life strategies," were intertwined with the immediate goal or motivation that each participant had with respective to our interview. These "interview goals" (also listed in Appendix D), while not explicitly stated by the participants, are inferred from the interview strategies. The range of strategies reflected the diverse ways one might "answer the world," and are, necessarily, only a partial list of the strategies the participants employed. There is no checklist available to evaluate how meaning is created in a text or a narrative, and consequently this list is more descriptive than comprehensive.

Authoring Oneself as Woman.

> I don't want [a boyfriend], like, right now I think it's a waste of time because I need to focus on school. Maybe—maybe later, that'll happen, someday later on, way, way far away from here. –Angie

> Yeah, I want to get my stuff sorted out, I want to do all the things I want to do, before I get married… –Elizabeth

Gender and sexuality were ever-present in these narratives, both explicitly and implicitly. These young women offered analysis of teen pregnancy and the dangers inherent in dating in high school. They also reflected more engrained societal expectations, like the obligatory statements clarifying whether or not they desired marriage and children. When I did not verbalize that question for Marie, for instance, she did it for me at the end of her narrative: "wait, you wanted me to get married or

something." Marie was expecting this imposed narrative, and had her challenge to it already prepared. Balancing career and family, as well as defining their expected role as the family's financial provider, was widely addressed.

While immigration status, ethnicity, language and class are all influential in the lives of the young women I interviewed, gender and sexuality are the primary ways that the participants are sorted and classified by others, and themselves.[19] It may be that the other categories like race or immigration status are more fluid, or more outwardly ambiguous; it may be that color-blind ideologies have made some of these issues verboten to talk about. Female sexuality, however, is always up for grabs. Sexuality and gender are first inferred by appearances; the image of a teenage girl agonizing over what outfit to wear to school is a common cultural trope, but one that takes on new significance when viewed as a decision that shapes her apparent identity as a woman, a student, and a potential success or failure.

Figurative archetypes and outward appearances. As Melissa Hyams illustrated, young Latina women's academic identity and potential for success is inherently gendered and sexualized (Hyams, 2000). "Boy crazy" teenage girls are not studious, nor do they think about their economic future and work potential. High academic achieving young women are imagined as shy, restrained, obedient and non-sexualized. Academic achievement is inversely related to sexual experience and even sexual desires. While the young women I interviewed would balk at an explicit connection between the two, their discourse reveals otherwise. The participants in this

[19] Female adolescent sexuality is also highly racialized, with societal standards and stereotypes being quite different for young women of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This effect of racialization and sexuality will be addressed in more depth in the section "Immigration, acculturation and minority status."

study quietly internalized gendered stereotypes as *de facto*, and used them in their description of other girls. However, the young women were astute at recognizing when others might be stereotyping them. Often this resulted in a quiet resistance, characterized by inner knowledge that the person judging them was wrong.

For instance, Angie spoke of family members who categorized her and the other girls in her family. These categories relied on stereotypical ideas of "good girls" and "bad girls." The "number one" girl would "be the one with the best grades, the one that will never go with this person, whatever, whatever." One cousin was labeled a bad girl, and was predicted to always fail. Angie herself had a more forgiving narrative imposed upon her: "I'm in the category in the middle, I was the one that was sometimes going to fail, and not be good, and then be all crazy, and all that." Even though Angie was being judged in a better light, she was still confronted with an unyielding stereotype that fell to her to prove wrong. While recognizing that these labels are artificial, and have little to do with who she is—or, who she will become—she finds it painful:

> And then with them, you don't want them to judge you more, because it hurts, even though they're words, it hurts, because they are coming from a person that you care about, but maybe they don't care about you. That's the way it is.

For Angie, it would not matter what she might accomplish; her grandparents will always judge her in the same way. The effect this has on Angie is twofold: she has less respect for her grandparents, and she avoids "being herself" around them. Her strategy was not to show her grandparents that they were wrong, but to cease to interact with them in an authentic manner.

Agency: the power to agree, disagree, or ignore.

Avoidance itself plays a large part in the success of some of these young women. They avoid trouble, avoid confrontations, and avoid drawing attention to themselves. The primary danger to be avoided—the one from which there is no return—is teenage pregnancy. Teen pregnancy was cited by almost all of the participants as not only a barrier to success in high school, but something that would preclude both good careers and secure lives. "Teen pregnancy" is a thematic archetype in the figured world of urban schools: there is a familiar cast of characters and a tragic, yet predictable, ending. "Teen pregnancy" stories are "warning" signs, directing the lives of adolescent girls throughout the country.

Avoiding pregnancy in itself becomes a goal, something to be achieved and to be proud of. Like the young women in Hyman's study, avoiding pregnancy takes self-control and determination. Even with that determination, however, Allison voices that there is always a possibility that "pregnancy" might happen regardless: "…I don't want to fall. And sometimes I feel like I'm too weak to come up, and I feel like I might get pregnant and get a job that might not be that good, and not live in a great house." Rather, her vision of a good future is to attend college, keep studying, have a career, and maybe adopt a baby. Having a life partner to raise the child with is not mentioned. For Allison, success cannot coexist with sexuality, desire, or romantic relationships.

Likewise, Julia refers to pregnancy as something that "happens" to some girls, a result of doing "bad things." When Julia describes her intention to wait to have a family until after she establishes her career, she qualifies it with "hopefully." This qualification may refer to the idea that in the "future" Julia will change her mind about the importance of establishing a career first (and that changing her mind would be a mistake). However,

"hopefully" more likely reflects the idea that pregnancy is a possible danger that is not within her complete control. Indeed, Julia's sister had a child when she was nineteen; her sister is a tangible reminder that different life paths are not necessarily that far apart.

The notion that teen pregnancy is not equivalent to moral, academic or economic disaster is never considered. Tolman and Szalacha's study of suburban and urban female adolescents provided similar examples of young urban women who could describe both their feelings of desire and sexuality, and the choice they were making to avoid the negative consequences of acting on those desires (Tolman & Szalacha, 1999). The question of why these participants did not question this societal stance, but seemed to accept it *a priori*, is open for further research. The traditional view suggests that adolescence is a time of broadening perspectives, and perhaps these young women were not developmentally ready to consider multiple perspectives and cultural biases (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). However, throughout their interviews these women often imagined the perspective of others and critiqued the status quo.

Additionally, other studies have documented ways that agentive thinking and narrative discourse among women can be used to interrogate conceptions of chastity or morality, despite whether a woman had abided by cultural norms or transgressed them (A. Gubrium, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2007). For instance, Menard-Warwick's study documented how a young woman described her sister's "disaster:" she had a child out-of-wedlock, as an adolescent. While the woman herself made choices that ostensibly kept her "pure," the way that she represented the viewpoints of other people, like her father, effectively challenged the gender discourse (Menard-Warwick, 2007). The participants in

this study, on the other hand, did not adopt similar linguistic strategies. Instead, the voices of society, families and themselves all appeared to be in agreement: the American dream of college and a "good life" is not possible if you become a teen mother.

Leveraging teen pregnancy as a cultural artefact. Rather than assuming the participants were passively acceptant ("foreclosing") of this idea that teen sexuality is equivalent to moral bankruptcy, it can be interpreted as an agentive strategy for survival. Instead of internalizing the "teen pregnancy" motif, they may have been leveraging the story to help them with their own plans for the future. While teen pregnancy does not have to permanently derail the well-laid plans for college, career, and life, it does—without question—pose a real barrier to achieving those goals. Questioning their assumptions about desire, sexuality and pregnancy might lead to an erosion of their resolve, and their real life experiences showed them that the consequences—whether or not they were justified, or could be mitigated in the future—would be dire.

Thus, to remain "novices" in the world of sexuality and its potential pitfalls, they needed to accept the "rules and maxims" of sexuality discourse without involving themselves. Developing an expert understanding—one that explores the nuances of morality, chastity and pregnancy—requires "the formation of a concept of *self* as an actor in the culturally devised system" (D. Holland et al., 1998, p. 120). Not questioning the accepted ideas about teenage sexuality, urban schools and pregnancy may a way of forestalling the participants' entry into a much more complicated set of circumstances from which it would be impossible to extract themselves: once you are an "expert," you can never return to being a "novice."

Boyfriend now, or success later.

Furthermore, while they assumed it was self-evident that teen pregnancy would prevent these young women from pursuing college and career, they explained that boyfriends generally would be a barrier to success. Boyfriends were the first step on the road to teen pregnancy, but they also could be distracting and a "waste of time." As Angie explained:

> …you have to focus it all on school because a boyfriend will like, sometimes, like, distract you from learning, and then, I don't know, I'm guessing it's like, it's better later on, because now you'll have your scholarship, you'll have everything, you'll have completed your goal, and then you'll have to chill a little bit.

Angie is convinced that being successful academically is antithetical to having a boyfriend, although she is vague in describing how or why. Allison, in describing her "fallen" cousin, presupposes this link between academic failure and having a boyfriend: "in 8th grade, [my cousin] escaped from high school and she was with her boyfriend and stuff like that." The idea that boyfriends (or future husbands) might share their goals, or that boyfriends could support and encourage them, is clearly unimagined.

Instead, both participants have ready examples illustrating that romantic relationships would lead them to ruin. Indeed, none of the young women in this study discussed any experiences, past or present, of the world of romance generally. From a figured worlds' perspective, the participants refused to identify with the world of romance at all, and effectively avoided one path that leads away from their identity as "college-bound."

Parents often use cautionary stories and teenage archetypes to guide their children. The custom of cautionary "*consejos*" has been specifically documented in some Latino families (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Villenas & Moreno, 2001), but parents

everywhere are familiar with the power of a "bad example" to make their point. Beyond mere stereotypes, these stories are usually linked with someone close to the family, or in the same school; this gives them the appearance of legitimacy and possibility. At some point, these young women began to internalize these parental "*consejos*" regarding romantic relationships, and the stories became an integral part of their own narrative. Allison, Angie and Julia each shared stories of "other girls" to guide their own behavior and to illustrate a specific aspect of their identity.

Because interwoven narratives work on multiple levels, they make an ideal strategy for identity negotiations and identity work. Narratives of ruin provide easily extractable rules to make day-to-day decision making easier. One such formula seems to be that a boyfriend will lead to distraction, distraction to temptation, and temptation to pregnancy. By establishing an identity in opposition to these "other girls," Allison, Angie and Julia also make use of the commonly accepted notion that there are "girls who do," and "girls who don't." Their own decision making becomes easier, and they are less likely to have their identity choices challenged by others.

This strategy offers a degree of power, as well. The young women, unhindered by pressures to find and keep a boyfriend, can appear and act the way they wish. Parental rules might be better maneuvered if they demonstrate the proper attitude toward sex and teen pregnancy. If these young women choose to begin dating, they can do so on their own terms and for their own reasons. What appears to be an oppressive restriction on adolescent girls' behavior can also be seen as a source of strength, an improvisation within a figured world.

An identity is a plan.

Elizabeth Heilman describes that for the adolescent girl, "having an identity establishes her way of fighting through world" (Heilman, 1998, p. 188) These issues extend far beyond the immediate issues of high school boyfriends and the danger of teen pregnancy. For Heilman, the central struggle facing young women today is a struggle for identity regarding social relationships and socioeconomic status. While young men are perhaps able to focus more on the external world, future employment and future economic status, as Erikson originally described, young women cannot divorce these issues from social status, relationships and future familial roles. The participants in this study supported this notion, and took it even further. Not only were both economic and relational concerns both important, but gainful employment was complexly intertwined with the possibilities of marrying or having a family (Appendix I).

While these young women all cited economic self-sufficiency as their central life goal, many specified that they would need to be able to support any future children *and husband* economically. This is quite different from the middle class narrative where women can have it all—family, career, and fulfillment—if only they "lean in." [20] Rather, these young women already know from their own experiences that they cannot, and will not, "have it all." These young women do not assume *a priori* that success is waiting for them if they just want it enough. Rather, they hope to establish a solid career that could provide the means to economically maintain a family. Future husbands are not counted as part of the equation; their socioeconomic and familial future is entirely in their own hands.

[20] Sheryl Sandburg's much discussed "Lean in: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead"

What is also clear from these irreconcilable standards is that gender and sexuality are complexly related in the lives of the young women, and of the participants of this study in particular. From appearances to expected behaviors, the participants in this study are identified first and foremost by their sex, and how they identify as "female." Sexuality is a main determinant in their ultimate success as individuals:

> The young women shared their conviction and concern that completing (or failing to complete) high school, with all that that achievement represented in terms of future success, depended upon their sexual morality and their behaviour as feminine gendered and heterosexual beings… they felt themselves to be singularly responsible for both their academic diligence and their bounded sexuality (in the face of great odds) in order to succeed as young women in high school and realise their goals as adult women beyond high school. (Hyams, 2000, p. 635)

For instance, concerns about teen pregnancy and teen parenthood often focus on the girl, putting the entire locus of control, and the consequences, in her realm. How they present themselves—as sexual beings with desires, or chaste girls uninterested in physical intimacy—shapes how other people treat them. Other people are the key to success for these participants, who will need the support of their family, friends, and scores of others. All of these people will be valuable social capital in the new figured world of their aspirations.

These young women seem to have internalized this message that overt sexuality is a barrier to achieving their dreams; none of the girls mentioned dating or relationships, and boyfriends, and none of the participants voiced any desire to get married and start a

family until well after they had established their careers. Almost all of the participants made this connection between success and celibacy, in one way or another. The only participant who did not, Marie, was largely silent on the topic of boyfriends or eventual marriage; her silence on the matter suggested a similar understanding.[21]

Whether this truly reflects the earnest belief in the incongruity of a sexual self with career aspirations, or reflects an understanding of what is needed to be considered "college bound," I will never know. However, what is apparent is that voicing sexual desires, wanting romantic relationships, and establishing families is not part of their current narrative.[22] The one thing that is certain is that their narrative *is* in their control.

Chapter 7

Analysis 3: Extracurricular Activities and the "Informal" Curriculum

One component of an inclusive environment that is currently missing in the formal curriculum is an institutional recognition of societal inequities and problems that traditionally "underserved" students might encounter (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). This is reflected in current efforts to be "color blind," yet promote minority achievement (Lubienski, 2003). Without recognizing any structural obstacles, the message students receive is that they are entirely responsible for "bettering" their lot in life; conversely, they are also entirely responsible for any

[21] Marie interprets a pause after her description of a desired future as an indication that I wanted her to talk about marriage. When I told her she could talk about it if she wanted to, she replied "no, I'll just leave it at that."

[22] I do not assume all of the young women in this study identify as heterosexual, although none of them specifically indicated otherwise. Some participants used gender neutral language in discussing dating or future life partners. This may have been a conscious choice in their narration or simply happenstance. What is clear, however, is that romantic relationships are not part of the stories they wished to tell in these interviews.

failures. This is apparent in Allison's narrative, in which she anticipates possible future "failures" as indications that she is "too weak to come up."

Attempts at curriculum reform that recognizes these barriers is often demonized (Zehr, 2010), and, as in Arizona, even legislated against[23]. Extracurricular groups offer opportunities for students to explore some of these issues, if a willing teacher will sponsor the club. City High currently has avenues through which these issues can be explored: AVID and other college preparatory programs aim to provide the missing social capital these students need to apply and be accepted to college; the social justice group "Stand and Serve" exists in order to educate students on important social issues like child abuse or poverty. These groups can be selective (not everyone can participate in AVID, for instance), and club participation can hinge on the ability to stay afterschool, or give up another activity. Understanding the complexities of identity, power and privilege, however, are essential for navigating our new global and technologically connected society.

Just as students need to develop an understanding of these issues, educators need to understand the role that school plays in shaping students' identities. The third research question addresses this broadly:

> What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

First I will give an overview of the participants' involvement in extracurricular activities, outside of their shared involvement in the Scrapbooking Club. Then, I delineate some of the differences that the participants see in the purpose of school with respect to the

[23] Arizona Revised Statute 15-112, "Prohibited courses and classes; enforcement."

"formal curriculum," and the benefits of extracurricular participation or related electives. Then, I identify some of the specific conceptual and material ways that the informal curriculum provided opportunities for identity development. Finally, I put the tension between the formal curriculum and the informal curriculum in context, with regard to the "college for all" narrative and the narrowing focus of U.S. high schools.

Catalog of Participation

The urban high school provides a very particular figured world (Hatt, 2007; D. Holland et al., 1998; Rubin, 2007; Urrieta, 2007) The inhabitants of this world—teachers, students, administrators, staff members, and occasionally parents—are constantly reconfigured into various groups with various purposes, ostensibly all in the service of learning. Some of these communities are self-imposed, while many are determined by others. Actors choose to what extent they will participate in these communities, or resist them. Meanwhile, educators are in a constant search for well running, school-sanctioned programs that promote student engagement and learning, however it is defined. These extras, however, tend to disappear with budget cuts and low teacher morale. They become less accessible, as well, when focus on core school subjects and test scores narrows the community's understanding of the purpose of school.

The participants in this study were involved in a wide variety of communities within the larger context of "urban high school" (see Table 2). This variety is both a reflection of the diversity among the participants, and the advantage that large urban high schools afford: there is truly "something for everyone."[24] While Angie participated in two "communities of participation" that were unrelated to school (afterschool

[24] City High's official motto, at the time of this study.

employment and a club soccer team), most of the other participants described only the world of their family and the world of school. However, while that assures a range of opportunities for students, it does not guarantee that students will find these opportunities outside of the education system. For instance, Allison was struggling to find something for the summer: "I really enjoy school. I don't know what I'm going to do during the summer. Because I don't have summer school or nothing." In some sense, this relates to the problem of social capital within disadvantaged communities; though high school can provide opportunities, it does not translate to finding similar supportive environments that middle class children might find commonplace (martial arts classes, ballet, pottery studios, swim lessons, etc.).

Angie was involved in year-round athletic sports teams: softball, tennis and soccer. Elizabeth, too, was involved in a type of athletic team: the dance company. Dance, for Elizabeth, was both an elective and an afterschool activity, and reflects the way the "informal curriculum" of school is difficult to categorize simply. Some sports teams—like football, or baseball—also can be taken as a "class" during the regular school day; this is not true for the women's sport teams.

Three of the students—Julia, Deborah and Elizabeth—were involved in the IB program, a sort of elite honor's program. The IB program provides advanced courses that can often earn college credit. There is required elective in the IB program called "Theory of Knowledge," which allows students to relate a philosophical perspective to their daily classes, and the world around them. The IB program also requires some out-of-school commitment, like required volunteer hours, field trips, and so on. The IB program is difficult to classify as part of the formal or informal curriculum. Admission to the

program is selective, and some students get discouraged from participating because of the prominence of end-of-course tests (both rigorous and costly, although some financial assistance is available). The "Theory of Knowledge" course takes place, in City High, during the time when other students are in study hall. The IB program is unlike other honors classes, which generally can be taken by any student and do not require a global time commitment to a full menu of required classes and activities. For students who do participate in the IB Program, and the few of those who earn their IB "diploma," the advantage going in to college is great.

More obviously distinct from what might be considered the "formal curriculum" (but not without some overlap of school) are the electives. Julia was involved in Culinary Arts classes, an elective program at City High, as well as orchestra, another elective. The Dance Company, again, is considered a hybrid of elective and club, and is obviously considered an "extra" school offering. Marie was involved in two such hybrids, JROTC and Marching Band. Marching band was offered "zero hour" (i.e. before school), but required outside participation in practices and competitions. JROTC, affiliated with the US Army, often was scheduled during first hour, and took place at another campus; students get bussed from one school to the other in time (theoretically) for their second period class. JROTC, too, required some outside participation, but also provided "perks," like the career-oriented field trip Marie took to see the air traffic controller.

Related to electives, but again slightly different, is the vocational school classes offered off-site to a consortium of area high school districts. These classes during either the first or second half of the school day, and the students are bussed to their regular campus for the other half. Marie was planning to take classes in diesel mechanics, in

preparation for her career in the army. Students could choose from a wide range of programs in an array of areas (e.g. healthcare, trades, computers, fashion, etc.). This school, and this opportunity, is primarily marketed as a way for teenagers to gain necessary job specific licensing or certification, and enable them to work their way through college. Students who are not planning to go to college also utilize the vocational school, although this is downplayed when the option is first presented to freshman and sophomores.

The last component of the "informal curriculum" is more straightforward: clubs. Clubs often have meetings afterschool or during lunchtime. Clubs tend to be unrestricted, in that students do not need to qualify, audition or compete to participate. Clubs are generally sponsored by teachers who are willing to work outside of their professional day and duties, and without pay. Clubs are more able to cater to the diverse and changing needs of the student population, and depend on ongoing student interest and commitment for their survival. Aside from Scrapbooking, only Julia and Marie participated in other clubs. Julia attended a few National Honor Society meetings, but found it unproductive and frustrating. Marie, on the other hand, made the most of her opportunities for informal education. She listed a litany of clubs like chess, robotics, a social justice club, and a peer program with autistic students. Marie was not timid about trying something that interested her, and not compelled to pursue activities that did not capture her attention.

How School and Extracurricular Activities are Valued

One question posed to the participants was "what do you think the purpose of school is?" Their answers reflected a variety of views, from Allison's vague, but

trusting, “for a good a future,” to Marie’s original wry and cynical assessment, “pretty much school is just to identify if you’re smart enough in the real world” (see Appendix J). What is interesting about these responses is the variety of themes represented by their answers: general future success, character development, career exploration, general education, communication skills, socialization for societal norms, societal sorting mechanism, independence, citizenship, and finally—with dubious sincerity—content related knowledge or skills.

All of the young women that I interviewed sited different transformational experiences that occurred in the context of school. Primarily, these experiences happened outside the formal classroom environment. In contrast to their responses for the purpose of school, the participants’ descriptions of the value they received from the “informal curriculum” is specific, nuanced, and personally-related. The formal curriculum represents what school is “supposed” to do for you, while the informal curriculum seems to be a place for identity exploration and personal growth.

Julia, for instance, explains that her IB English class helped her become a better reader and give her confidence. However, it is her description of speaking up when people were making fun of freshman (she was one) that she sites as an important high school event. In both places her confidence increased, but it is the moment when she spoke up that she remembers vividly, the moment when she effected change in the social context she was part of. Being more confident with academic skills is notable, but being better able to communicate with people is more empowering. The traditional curriculum in the classroom improved her academic abilities, but not in a way that she expressed was personally relevant outside of an academic identity.

Marie, too, had many transformative experiences, all of which were outside of the formal classroom. She recognized the constraints of the classroom, and saw academic classes as just a series of "tests:"

> Yes, yeah, JROTC just helped me too, and that's cool, so I really think school really helps you in life, with JROTC, marching band, band—you can join Marine Corps, you can do whatever you want. Well I think mostly electives help you in the future, not really as much as tests… See, you can't even do what you want to do in math, how is, like a math test going to help you in the future, what if you don't even want to go to college, I don't understand that. You have to have—why do you have to have credits, a certain amount of credits, can't we just, like, do what we can. I don't know. School.

Outside of the classroom she could talk about issues of social justice, the merits of the military, and the best ways to strategize in a game. The experiences she sited from her club activity were experiences she connected to many different aspects of her life. They changed the way she thought, the way she viewed herself, and how she saw others. These experiences excited her; class was something to endure.

Other transformative experiences were more tangible. Elizabeth found dance to be a central experience in her high school career, and her narrative was structured based on that experience. She sites being challenged, working hard at something, and achieving goals in the dance company as most influential in her life. She talks about the influence that the dance instructor had on who she was as a person, what choices she made, and how she came to think of herself.

The Informal Curriculum and its Afforded Opportunities

The informal curriculum in urban schools simultaneously mixes conceptual and material self-authoring opportunities in a way that the formal curriculum does not. Much of the informal curriculum teaches through participation. Through actual "doing," the scrapbooking club allows students to build meaning through words and images, and then communicate this meaning to other people. The act of scrapbooking, meeting as a group, planning new projects and discussing ideas are material processes that build identity. The stories the participants tell in the scrapbooking club, how those stories are told, and how the participants then incorporate their club involvement into their life narratives, are all conceptual processes in creating identity. The material processes of identity building are directly connected to the conceptual processes; they build upon each other, overlap and blend in ways that can be transformative.

The six-word memoir scrapbooking project offer a glimpse of the opportunities offered by the informal curriculum. The initial project for the scrapbooking club that year was to create a one-page, six-word "memoir" that summed up who they were. Everyone started with a photo of themselves, taken in the science laboratory/classroom where the club met during lunches. Taking the photo itself was an event. Some participants, like Elizabeth, smoothed their hair and struck a smile; in her photo she appeared happy and friendly. Other participants, like Allison and Angie, looked demurely into the camera, and created sophisticated, "older" looking portraits. As they took the photos, there was laughing and posing as they tried possible "personas."

Deciding on the six words they would use was another step to the process. Elizabeth decided what hers would be right away: "I'm just trying to graduate, bro." In

six words she encapsulated the themes within her entire life narrative: she is outgoing and fun, ready to move on to the adult world and leave childhood behind. While she was creating her one-page memoir, she was cheerful and talkative as she embodied—and advanced—her short narrative.

Traditional, "formal" classwork, on the other hand, lacks this essential connection between the material participation itself, and a conceptual construct of who they are as a person. Consequently, traditional classes are unlikely to be transformative for students. The traditional curriculum consists primarily of tasks that are isolated from the content being taught. For instance, a worksheet for a government class is unrelated to actually participating in the governing of a body; solving a series of math problems is unrelated to using math to juggle a budget and grocery shopping. The one thing the formal curriculum can offer, in terms of building identity, is opportunities that advance adolescents' image of themselves as students.

Marie's narrative often highlighted the disconnect between the content of her classes and the "content" of real life. While Marie has a valid point, her failure in math class did "teach" her a great deal about who she was, and who she "should" have been:

> Ah, I guess math last year because I was always late and I never did the homework. So procrastination got in the way of that I think. And, because lateness, tardiness… you know, to be honest, sometimes I don't do the homework at night… No, I don't really think I learned anything.

Marie, literally, was denied the opportunity to participate; every time she was late her teacher sent her "sweeps[25]" for the remainder of the class period. Without the opportunity for material participation in a classroom context where success was possible, the only conceptual interpretation available of "Marie the math student" focused on her shortcomings as a student.

Julia, more inclined to see the value in the content of her classes, describes a class in which she "learned a lot:"

> I would say my IB English class, usually I'm not a good a reader, I don't like to read very much, but in my IB class I've grown, I can trust myself to read now. I can spell better. Um, it's given me more confidence, the IB, in the IB classes we present a lot, so I've gotten the fear of like, getting up and having to talk to the classroom, so I've gained confidence.

Unlike the confidence Elizabeth gained from the dance club, with which she was ready to try new things and tackle new challenges, Julia's transformative experience in her English class made her better prepared for future classes. Her material participation in class activities changed her concept of "who she was," but was unrelated to other aspects of her identity or her life.

Schooling, Adolescence and Future Opportunities

In this world of multiplying multiplicities, institutions like schools play a leading role in shaping youth and the opportunities they are afforded. Public education, however, has long promoted factory-style schools and standardized academic goals for all students.

[25] "Sweeps" was held in the lecture hall, and essentially was a holding place for students denied entry to their class because of lateness. At the end of that particular period, students proceed to their next class.

"Success" has been defined, literally, as "going to college." High schools are routinely evaluated in terms of how many of their students are accepted to college and universities, and secondarily, how many actually attend and graduate from higher education. College is a viable pathway for anyone who values education enough, and is willing to make sacrifices for it. While students are increasingly diverse, the way that public education sees students is increasingly narrow.

However, in a pro-social society the goal is to foster positive individual growth, as well as to develop and sustain desirable communities. The ostensible purpose of public education has been long contested and debated, but it generally involves the creation of productive, thinking individuals who contribute in some way to the larger society (Gay, 2007). Schools are further recognized as a place where societal inequities might be addressed (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). It would follow, then, that school should support students at this critical time period by offering ways that students can think critically about the world they live in and their place in it. In order to do this, it is necessary to question the "prevailing trend" that academics and individual achievement should be the focus of high schools.

Meanwhile, increasing demands for accountability and rigorous curriculum often limit school-sanctioned opportunities for self-expression, identity exploration and engaged scholarship (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007). Many teenagers are now participating in two realms of public education.[26] One realm is the sanctioned curriculum that addresses learning mandated by standardized curriculum and legislation like *No*

[26] Hidden curriculum, often considered the second curriculum, operates at both a formal and an informal level. I would argue that there exist three curricula—formal, informal, and hidden—that each has a particular genesis and functionality in education. However, for the purposes of this paper I am only distinguishing between formal and informal schooling opportunities.

Child Left Behind. The other realm is the informal curriculum of school, like clubs, extracurricular activities, or special programs like JROTC and vocational tracks. It is possible that this other realm of education is increasingly the only place within schools where transformative critical thinking is allowed and encouraged. By examining the fluid and complex identity constructions of some of our most vulnerable students, we can better understand how schools can be an avenue for changing the social structure rather than reproducing it.

This is not to say that formal classes cannot be transformative in a number of ways. Yes, it is possible to make connections between life now and "Romeo and Juliet," as Allison remarks. It is possible to get excited about those connections and to bring that knowledge to other aspects of life. And yes, an understanding of how government works can change the way you perceive the world around you. However, the reality is that formal classes are usually not transformative in this way. Worse yet, students often leave classrooms feeling that they are "bad readers," lazy, or just less than who they really are. Marie describes this problem when she references the results of her three state graduation tests, which she had just learned that she passed on her first attempt:

> I was like, surprised, because, I didn't think I was going to pass writing, because I didn't even finish it. Like, it's crazy. I hate this. When you take tests or something you know you study, or you worked hard on it, you're like, hey I got this down, and you bomb it. Not bomb it like good, like you fail it. And then things you don't feel good about you're like, I know I failed, you do good on it. I don't know why that happens. That's really messed up.

Paradoxically, the emphasis of "college for all" may work against the very students that educators are targeting.

The young women have illustrated the importance to make school a place that students are connected to, and feel they can thrive in. Ideally, every class would be pertinent to student's lives, and they would be able to identify themselves as scientists, mathematicians, writers and athletes. Unfortunately, there are political constraints that currently prevent or discourage that from happening. There are also practical constraints, in that being scientists, mathematicians or future writers is not a tangible identity for many students. Often the need for school to be a place of belonging and support is forgotten.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Struggling Over Futures in Educational Contexts

This research began with a three-part argument about current educational opportunities in the United States. First, U.S. schools mirror the historical inequities in our society, and tend to reproduce them rather than enable all students to be successful (Lareau, 2015). Second, instead of using successful minority students as evidence to support the idea that schooling is already working for all students (Sosa & Gomez, 2012); they can be used as examples of how particular students made schooling work for them (Stinson, 2006; Wright, 2011). Finally, by understanding the strategies and contexts by which these students find success, we can begin to reshape schools so that they may someday "work for everyone."

Chapter two, the literature review, established some of the ways that adolescent identity development, structural inequities, and schooling intersect in the lives of today's

teenagers. An expanding theoretical understanding of identity as multiple, changing and contextual is not reflected in our educational culture, or the vision of success prevalent here in the United States. It is a common argument that public schools should not be trying to "shape" the character of students, but it is fallacy to think that schools are "neutral" in this regard. Accepting that, schools can take a more proactive approach to creating a supportive environment for all students; however, we as educators first need to understand what changes can be made to create these supportive environments.

To better address these issues, I propose re-envisioning public schools in this country as serving students, rather than serving our ideas of meritocracy and its illusive promise of the American Dream. To do this, we must begin with questions, instead of pushing decontextualized academic achievement and individual determination as the key factors to "success" (defined by college attendance and middle-class values). Generally, I propose three central questions: (1) How do adolescents envision themselves and their desired futures?, (2) What strategies do adolescents use to actualize these narratives?, and (3) How is schooling already supporting adolescents in reaching their goals?

For this dissertation, the questions were reformulated specifically for a particular group of young women who had been participating in an afterschool scrapbooking club:

1. What stories of identity do teenage girls in an urban high school construct and what matters most in these narratives?
2. How do these students negotiate the competing narratives of family, school and society with their own individual narratives?
3. What role do extracurricular activities and the "informal" curriculum play in shaping their identity?

Within this paper I have tried to seek answers to these questions, at least with respect to six young, successful, minority women in an urban, Title I high school.

The case studies (chapter four) look at each narrative as a unified story, and tease out individual themes through a literary analysis. Each case study highlights a participant as an individual, and tries to incorporate their voices as much as possible. The content analysis of the data, on the other hand, identified themes by segmenting the data, coding and counting, and iteratively refining code categories (chapter five). This provided an overview of the content of the stories across participants, and made evident specific similarities and differences among the narratives. It is important to note that these two analyses complement each other. For instance, Angie's narrative suggested the specific themes of family, personal integrity and academic achievement; these themes reflect the centrality of achievement and family across all of the narratives. This parsimoniousness over various interrogations of the data supports the validity of the analysis as a whole.

Chapter six examines how the participants navigate identity negotiations, success narratives and their own idiosyncrasies. Compiled lists of the material and conceptual strategies they employ support the notion that there cannot be one generic strategy for success (i.e. study hard, work hard). Chapter seven expands upon these strategies, and focuses on the ways that schooling both supports and discourages the participants' individual pathways. I situate these last two analysis chapters within the literature previously described in chapter two. This conclusion summarizes the findings overall, and uses the findings as a springboard with which to show how schools might be "remade" using this new student-centered focus of K-12 education.

Limitations of the Current Study

The research presented within this dissertation reflects the lives of six young women in an urban high school, and the narratives they created when being interviewed by a teacher at their school. Narratives and in-depth interviews offer rich information about specific phenomena, but lack the power of larger scale research studies. However, this research has some important implications for identity research, narrative research, and research specifically looking at identity development within the urban school context. This study also draws attention to the need to examine the lives of students who fall in the "middle," whether due to their quiet demeanor, their compliance, or their consistently "good enough" academic performance.

In-depth life narratives and qualitative research methods were well suited to the first two research questions. Because of the open nature of the interviews, it was possible to identify what the participants thought was most relevant in their lives, at least within the context already discussed (see chapter three, "Research Design"). It was also possible to identify both material and conceptual ways that participants created their desired identities. The third analysis question regarding the role that the informal curriculum played in identity development, however was limited by the diversity and unevenness of the available data. Not all aspects of the informal curriculum—clubs, sports, and electives—were relevant to each participant, and it was difficult to generalize different affordances of the informal curriculum other than its comparison to the formal curriculum.

Future studies using this approach could provide more insight if there was a commonality either in the aspect of the informal curriculum (e.g. all participants involved

in a common club) or if the interview had included a series of directed questions to elicit such information. These questions could have been at the end of the interview, so as to not influence the main themes of the interview. The questions that were asked for this research were limited by the direction the participants already took the interview; a further suggestion would be to have two separate interview occasions, one using an open interview format and one using more directed questions.

This study was largely exploratory in nature; and the results would allow follow-up work that is much more focused and generalizable. The idea of critical awareness and its relationship with the college-for-all narrative is particularly compelling; Angie, in a program to help students without the social capital to navigate the road to college, and Marie, in a social awareness/social action club that directly addressed structural inequities, made an interesting comparison. Each program was designed to try to ameliorate social injustice, but in a distinct way.

Theoretical Implications and Future Research

The interpretive framework utilized in this study was Holland et. al.'s "social practice theory of identity" (D. Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; D. Holland & Lave, 2001a). In social practice theory, the individual and society mutually constitute each other, each influencing the other's development. Individual identity is formed by participation in different societal contexts, or figured worlds. Each of the stories told in the narratives in some way reflected the process of "identity work" for the narrator. This is the crux of identity work: how do individuals respond when notions of self are contested or challenged?

This study examined two types of processes for self-authoring: conceptual and material. Conceptual processes relate to what Urrieta calls "contexts of meanings for concepts of domain of action, for artefacts, and for action (behavior) and for people's understandings of themselves" (2007, p. 110). Conceptual processes tend to relate to the literal meanings and interpretations voiced by the participants while they recounted past events. Material processes, in contrast, occur in the realm of action, when people "enact every day performances of these senses of self" (Urrieta, 2007, p. 110).

Material and conceptual processes, of course, inform each other and can be difficult to tease apart. In this research, the interview data was used as both a history of identity and a performance of it. While participants had recounted many past "performances of self" to create the content of their life history narratives, it was the interview itself—how participants responded to questions, what stories they chose to tell, and importantly, what context they provided for the stories—that constituted material self-authoring. These two dichotomies created a 2 x 2 grid that yielded four possible ways to create identity (figure 4). Further research might further capitalize on how these four possibilities work together to create a coherent depiction of identity.

The distinction between material and conceptual processes offers another unique avenue for further research regarding the differing affordances of the formal and informal curriculums. It was apparent that the informal curriculum had more possibilities for material participation and conceptual self-authoring that was complimentary. For instance, Elizabeth's participation in dance allowed her to become more outgoing, expressive, and confident; the physical act of dancing is related to each of those three outcomes. Marie's success in passing her graduation tests, and the other hand, had

limited value for its potential impact on her identity; she couldn't even draw the conclusion that she was competent or adept at the three areas tested. Future research could identify ways that people are transformed by their participation in school, and whether the strength and vitality of this transformation is increased when the material participation matches the conceptual authoring.

Marie illustrated the importance of understanding competing narratives when she described her failure in math class. Her initial explanation of why she failed was exactly the way teachers would view the situation: essentially, she was somewhat lazy and irresponsible, and had poor organizational skills. Later, when Marie talked about the future, she made it clear that careers that require a lot of schooling—at least, schooling that is similar to what she has already experienced—are of no interest to her. While overall she gets good grades and is academically quite capable, Marie does not see herself as an ideal student. That "lack of fit" limits the possibilities, whether her perceptions are accurate or not.

The figured world of City High School is the context of this study and the thread that links all of the participants together. Understanding particular stories within figured worlds provides us with a way to interpret how individuals conceptualize themselves and "create" themselves for others. This, in turn, shapes individuals' formulations of what is possible in the future.

College or Bust: The Dangers of a Narrow Educational Focus

The figured world of high school has reinforced the value of doing well in school and continuing to college. At the same time, the participants receive the message that education is their only chance to improve their lot in life. Within such an environment,

when highly achieving students fail to make it to or through a four-year college, there is a risk that they see it as a monumental failure, and a reflection of the strength and value of their identity (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Alternative pathways, like community colleges or vocational training, often come with a stigma of their own (M. M. Holland, 2015). This "college-for-all" discourse fails to prepare students for the difficulties ahead—particularly those with little social capital in the realm of higher education (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; Ruecker, 2013).

City High has a high placement rate of students in the community colleges, and a strong vocational education program, but, as demonstrated in previous studies, a four-year college degree is largely considered "the" destination for success (M. M. Holland, 2015). The vocational program, for instance, has often been touted as a way to finance a college education rather than an end in itself; students trained in a trade can work their way through college or university. With good intentions to help their students "make it" to the world of college, many educators work tirelessly to prepare their students with academic knowledge, study strategies, and college aspirations. Many of the programs designed to help students go to college have been specifically geared for students who lack social capital, like the participants in this study. Getting students scholarship money and college acceptance offers has been a measure of City High's success, and a point of pride.

As a school, City High has done a good job at addressing structural barriers to success; however, City High cannot eliminate these barriers. This problem can be further exacerbated by individual student personalities that keep them "under the radar." Often, quiet students with good grades get overlooked (Townsend & Fu, 1998). There is a

noticeable gap between high performing students with outgoing personalities, and students with solid "A" or "B" averages who might just need a little extra assistance. If a student were not part of one of City High's college readiness programs (each with its own specific criteria for inclusion), it was unlikely they would receive any individualized help or encouragement in scholarship applications or college research.

Minimum wage jobs were seen as the pinnacle of failure. Elizabeth explained how "a job in retail" is just "no way to live." Without economic security, Elizabeth remarked that she would no longer want to get married or have children. These young women have grown up in a society and a school system that links identity and self-worth to career. Sure, their parents might be working minimum wage jobs, but with the opportunities they have and enough determination, they should be able to improve their lot in life. At the same time, these young women have watched family and friends unsuccessfully try to find jobs or careers, some of who graduated from high school and made all the right choices. They realize that a minimum wage job is very real possibility. Furthermore, they frame it as a final destination, one that they would not be able to leave.

Again, this is a double bind of our meritocracy. Employment is something we do not have total control over. While graduating from high school is an accomplishment, and a measure of success, it does not guarantee a job better than our parents. For many "urban" students, research has shown that, while many college aspiring adolescents have faith in themselves and their ability to work hard, there is an unknown factor in future success outside of their control (Blustein et al., 2010; Kenny et al., 2007; Lease, 2004; Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015). Increasingly, those in the middle class are recognizing the same phenomena with college degrees; a college degree does not guarantee a "good"

job. Yet we have come to define our identities are defined by the job we have—or the job that we do not have.

In pushing "college and career readiness," our schools are setting up unrealistic expectations in the current economy, without providing adequate support (Jerrim, 2014; Rosenbaum, 2011). Unfortunately, many people, like the women in my study, make huge sacrifices to attend and pay for college. However, they may find that it still is not enough. "Pulling one up by their own bootstraps" does not take into account the realities of today's job market.

Remaking Figured Worlds to Expand the Possibilities

One way to understand the nature of negotiating identities is to contextualize it within a particular interpretive framework. This research is rooted in a sociocultural view of human development, where individual "identities" are created within larger social spheres. Individuals develop within the context of culture, yet they also play a role in transforming it through agentive actions. A "social practice theory of identity," as developed by Dorothy Holland, William Lachicotte, Jean Lave and others, describes identity as it is created by local actions within the whole of human history (D. Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; D. Holland & Lave, 2001a; D. Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta Jr, 2007). Identity changes through acquiring and applying new conceptual understandings, as well as embodying and enacting these concepts through material action. These actions can in turn shape or transform the culture of the figured world as it progresses through time.

"Culture" is a word that encompasses the social, political and economic "enduring struggles" that both contribute to, and are changed by, the individuals who find themselves in their midst. Struggles can be epic in nature; as Holland and Lave suggest,

"perhaps Struggles with a capital *S*" (2001a, p. 21). These broad struggles, with their concomitant institutions and processes, create local contexts of everyday life, and local struggles. The contentious struggles then transform the broader contexts that created them.

Students and the gradual remaking of urban high schools. However, unlike the contributors to Holland and Lave's book, my participants did not seem to engage in anything "contentious" at all; rather they were quiet and agreeable, a teacher's dream. These young women did not get in trouble, they earned good grades, and they were respectful toward their peers and adults. But this is yet another narrative that is ascribed to them, another narrative to reconcile with. These young women struggle to find their own voice amid all the people constructing them as someone else. It is this struggle that represents their "local contentious practice."

Through their struggles to find their voice, the participants in turn contributed to the remaking of their urban high school. Elizabeth described a small way that she contributed to more systemic change:

> Now that I'm a senior I try, like, I'm not the same, I try to connect with the sophomore—[inaudible]—I try to connect with her and the juniors just to make them feel better because when I was a sophomore it was not that way… Yeah, now I feel like I am, a good social leader in dance, but it took a lot, it didn't take till my senior year probably because my sophomore year there were always people in charge and junior year even people were in charge, and senior year I just decided to take the initiative, so now I'm just like, "So-and-so, what's going on in

your life?" because, like, I wish someone had done that when I was a sophomore, so it's the least I can do.

Elizabeth, struggling to overcome her quiet and shy nature, recognized the social conditions in which she was struggling could have been improved by making the dance club a more welcoming place.

These efforts do not necessarily need to be as concerted, where societal change is intended. Marie, in her cryptic remark when I asked her what her "race" was, contributed to world remaking. First she resisted my question. Then when I rephrased it by asking, "are you African-American?" she replied, "Uh huh. Yeah. But, if we don't go in too deep, pretty much." Marie is part of a larger shift in society that is questioning racial categories the meaning of race in our society. Within City High, the "Stand and Serve" club is part of this shift, and Marie is one of its ambassadors.

Remaking for educators: implications. Too often researchers, educators and social service providers are looking for a "holy grail" in terms of possible interventions: a set of strategies that will work for most people in most situations (Hunt, 2005; Nielsen, 2013). When looking deeply at the strategies employed by even a small number of people within a community—people who have different temperaments, goals, and narratives—it becomes apparent that there is no one recipe for success. Young people must develop specific strategies that work for them, and for the life stories they wish to author. Furthermore, these strategies will be in constant flux, as young people move in and out of different sociocultural contexts.

One way to work toward a school has "something for everyone" is to provide rich elective coursework, special programs geared toward success after high school, and a

multitude of extracurricular opportunities. They need the place and time to be able to do things: dance, play chess, make scrapbooks, and walk among the chickens. Educators can be lulled into the assumption that learning takes place internally, in people's minds. But learning, like anything else, is a socially constructed activity that takes place in the physical world, with physical objects. It happens as a result of social interaction with others.

It is possible that the new 21st century schools, with the focus on technology, access to knowledge, and the ability to communicate over long distances, is beginning to neglect the physical aspect of learning. As educators, we need to be aware that we are increasingly spending more time in an abstract realm of thought and ideas. We might consider computers and technology an anecdote to this problem, because they can engage students directly. However, interacting with information on a screen and through a machine, no matter what form it takes, is still an abstraction.Beyond that, however, students need arenas where they can wrestle with ideas and have their assumptions challenged. They need physical spaces where ideas can be shared with others and existing assumptions can be questioned. They need to be able to engage in social exchanges in the physical world, where verbal utterances and posture give people clues to what others are thinking. In the physical world, we construct narratives and ideas together, with other people; this, too, is a critical 21st century skill that we often undervalue.

A New 21st Century Skill: Critical Awareness[27]

When I consider the many ideas and approaches that educators bandy about for improving education and learning, I keep coming back to one enduring concept, one powerful idea: critical education. Throughout my study I heard the voices of capable, intelligent young women who had very different outlooks on the world. All of these women are "at risk" for not achieving their dreams, for a wide variety of reasons. None of these reasons were because they are not good enough, not smart enough, or not strong enough. Yet too often opportunities to recognize these invisible roadblocks were missed or ignored.

Julia knew what it was like to be speaking Spanish and have people make assumptions about her and her family. Yet in her interview with me, she brushed this aside, saying "I don't really take a lot of offense to it." She assumes that type of thinking is primarily associated with a much older generation. In the "color blind" world we now inhabit, we talk less and less about structural inequities that effect women, minorities, the poor, the disabled, and so on. Without recognizing that these inequities still exist, and still quietly exert their force on the trajectories of our life, we all are at a disadvantage.

The Ethnic Studies program in the Tucson schools was an excellent approach to critical education, and it was transformative for both the students and the educators. The Ethnic Studies program also showed the potential for raising academic achievement within an educational system that traditionally favors decontextualized knowledge and

[27] The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (http://www.p21.org/) identifies the "knowledge and skills [students] need to thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops. There four broad categories are "Content Knowledge and 21st Century Themes," "Learning and Innovation Skills," "Information, Media and Technology Skills," and "Life and Career Skills." Critical awareness is not included.

obedience (Cabrera et al., 2013; Zehr, 2010). Understanding how to write a term paper is an important college-readiness skill, but so is recognizing the identity shifts that need to be made to become a successful college student (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012). Extracurricular activities, electives, and hybrid programs that combine the two, like the offerings at City High, are possible ways to provide these opportunities. While formal curricular interventions show great progress, these types of opportunities may be more realistic in climates where "Ethnic Studies" is legislated against (see chapter 2, "Addressing stereotypes and stereotype threats"). They are also important in large urban school settings where personal interests vary widely. In the narratives, we saw that Elizabeth became captivated by dance, Julia by academics and scrapbooking, and Marie by clubs and activities in which she could truly participate.

Many of our students are involved in complex, inward journeys that try to make sense of their experiences. Grappling with personal identity amid competing narratives from family members and school authorities seems to be a hallmark of adolescent development. However, many of these students are not given the tools necessary to look outside their immediate surroundings and make the connections that are the most important. They are working within a system that promotes some groups or specific behaviors, and denounces others. Understanding the history of schooling and the dynamics of race are essential in understanding that one teacher can unwittingly convince students that they are lazy or incapable (Hatt, 2007; Wortham, 2004a).

Critical education is not a method, and it is not an "add-on" part of the curriculum like a token word problem at the bottom of a math worksheet. Critical education is an approach, a way of looking at knowledge, society, individuals and citizenship (Giroux,

1997, 2011). Students need to understand how our notions of meritocracy are countered by real structural barriers. Students need to understand where they fit in the larger scheme of history and society. Separating personal identity from societally imposed identities will help students develop the attitudes and skills they need to achieve their own goals. Critical awareness of "who we are" is the key to true success and transformation.

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APPENDIX A

HISTORY OF PROJECT

You can get a whole Ph.D. in education without reading a single thing said by a student about their experience of being in school. They are authorities on schooling, but nobody asks them.

Peggy McIntosh

I consider myself fortunate. My first attempt at a research project for my dissertation—the capstone experience of my doctoral education in educational psychology and lifespan development—failed. Through my research, my discussions, and my experience, I began to consider myself somewhat of an authority on certain areas of education. However, I had forgotten the one thing I was sure of when I began my program: *educators need to listen to their students*.

Listening, you see, has its drawbacks. It is not a task with a correct answer to be discovered. It does not provide data to support a strategic and measurable goal that can quantify how successful a teacher has been.[28] Listening is not generally taught in educational methods classes or discussed during in-service teacher education. Nevertheless, listening is an ongoing necessity for effective teachers. By failing to listen to students, I was not (at first) able to provide an opportunity for them that would simultaneously allow me to learn from them.

I have been, and currently am, an educator. I have been fortunate to serve a large variety of students in my career. I have taught in the Southwest and the Midwest of the United States, and in rural, suburban and urban schools. I have taught students from

[28] Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Time-bound goals (SMART goals) are often associated with the work of PLCs, or Professional Learning Communities (Dufour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Through SMART goals and PLCs, educators are able to make (and justify) evidence based decisions that will increase student achievement in targeted and efficient ways. These ideas have gained wide popularity in K-12 education with the growing amount of school accountability legislation.

diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. My students have spoken different languages and had vastly different experiences of school. They have different needs, goals and desires. They have ranged in their willingness and ability to express these myriad of differences and their potential significance in my classroom. But all of my students had a unique viewpoint that I could learn from—if I was listening.

My original plan for this dissertation combined action with research. I am passionately interested in the education of resettled refugee students, who often slip through the educational system without achieving basic academic standards. I believe the key to true progress for these students lies in creating communities within schools that utilize everyone's strengths and background to achieve common goals (teachers, mainstream students, and resettled students together). I planned on providing an opportunity that I believed would be beneficial for both refugee students and the general population.

Schools like City High, a large urban public high school in a state with below average funding of education, are quite different than schools in more affluent areas. Access to technology is limited, and the focus of the classroom tends to be on factual and procedural knowledge. I started a digital storytelling club that provided students with access to digital technology and the expertise of others. Through the process of digital storytelling, students could develop skills that open doors both academically and in the workplace. In turn, I could examine their digital stories to investigate identity development: how these students expressed themselves, how they incorporated the past and future into the present, and what was most meaningful to them.

I failed to consider the lives of my students, and what their own interests would be. The club was not successful. What my students wanted most was *not* to make elaborate stories with music and narration. Instead, these students wanted to borrow the digital cameras and take pictures of their friends and families, school life and home life. They wanted to share those pictures with their friends, one-on-one, in places of their own choosing.

I then began to participate in the school's scrapbooking club. There I discovered a similar theme. The students had their own agendas, which were far more compelling than mine. What these students seemed to want most from a club was a place to go with their friends, and something tangible to work on that offered a respite from their normal class work. However, this engagement itself was legitimate learning and "identity work."

My role, and the role of the school, was more difficult to understand. The students knew I was a math teacher at the school, although known of them had me personally. If I had a reputation among the students, it might have been that I was "socially conscious." For instance, I was a sponsor of the Gay-Straight Alliance on campus, and I did not tolerate racism, sexism, or any other "-ism" in my classroom. I had heard that students generally considered me calm, fair, and "nice." The students in the Scrapbooking Club had a more personal relationship with the other co-sponsor, whose personality was much different than mine. I was more peripheral to their club participation.

It is important to note that my background has been very relevant at every stage of the research process, including how my participants were recruited, the motivations they had for agreeing to be interviewed, and the stories that they told during the interview.

The questions I posed, how I asked them, and how I responded to their answers affected what these young women said. Even the amount of "wait time" I afforded my participants after I posed questions or after they offered responses shaped the interview itself (Rowe, 1974, 1986).

While I had a sociocultural understanding of the subjectivity of research and the ubiquitous nature of cultural contexts for any sort of event, I was still bothered about the legitimacy of this study and any conclusions I might draw. What if my participants agreed to participate because they have been trained to be polite to teachers and to comply with their requests? I felt like I was intruding on personal aspects of their lives that they might not otherwise have shared with me, and when I later listened to the interview tapes I could hear ambivalence in my voice. At times during the interview I noticed my participants said things—social cues—that invited further inquiry. Unfortunately, my focus on conducting "good" research and not overly biasing the interviews caused me to miss these cues. I have come to understand that this is not a failing of my study, or a limitation, but merely another context that needs to be considered when creating my final dissertation narrative describing these girls and their lives (J. Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007; Helsig, 2010).

All of us—but perhaps especially today's teenagers—will find avenues for participation, self-expression, and meaning making. Can schools specifically provide for and support this process of identity development? My answer is yes, but not in the manner I had originally thought. Providing opportunity and access is an important function of schools, yes. But supporting them in "identity work" involves a high degree of planning and a clear structure. It is something in which students need to feel

ownership and engage in authentic dialogue; it also needs receptive audiences for the students' ideas, opinions and stories. Finally, designing a successful program to support students' identity work requires a little bit of luck.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Kathryn Nakagawa WILSN
From:	FOR Mark Roosa, Chair OM Soc Beh IRB
Date:	12/04/2012
Committee Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Approval Date:	12/04/2012
Review Type:	Expedited F7
IRB Protocol #:	1211008579
Study Title:	Identify Development of adolescent studies by participating in scrapbooking and storytelling club
Expiration Date:	12/3/2013

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

Scrapbooking and Storytelling – Life Story Project

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Parent:

My name is Emily Bogusch. I am a teacher at Tempe High School. I am also a graduate student under the direction of Professor Kathy Nakagawa in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research project to study identity development through participation in a scrapbooking and storytelling club.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve four interviews throughout the school year (approximately 1 hour/interview). These interviews will be afterschool. The interviews will be audiotaped. In the interview I will be asking your child for a "life story." Topics will include significant life events, world views, school experience, and your child's view of the future. We will also discuss the work your child produces in the scrapbooking club. At the end of the year I will conduct a focus group interview with all of the participants regarding their experiences in the club. Your child can skip any question she does not feel comfortable answering. I will also take notes regarding club meetings and club interactions.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty--it will not affect your child's grade or treatment at school. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used. If you give permission for us to use your child's photograph, these photographs may be used in written publications about the study or at professional presentations and conferences.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation.

Participation and responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be used. The only reason confidentiality would be breached is if your child is at risk for injury, since I am mandatory reporter of suspected harm to children.

Any data from the project will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. All audio recordings will be erased at the end of the study and any written data will be shredded.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at ([redacted] or Dr. Nakagawa at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Emily Bogusch

ASU IRB Approved
Sign SM
Date 12/4/12 - 12/3/13

By signing below, I give consent for my child _____ (child's name) to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name		Date

Photos of participants or participant work may be used in written reports of the study as well as professional presentations or conferences.

By signing below, I agree to have my child's photo used for the study.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Printed Name		Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at ([redacted].

Scrapbooking and Storytelling – Life Story Project

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF ASSENT/CONSENT

My name is Emily Bogusch. I work at Tempe High School and Arizona State University.

I am asking you to take part in a research project because I am trying to learn more about identity development in adolescents. I want to learn about how you think about the world and your place in it. Your parent(s) will be asked for permission separately if needed.

If you agree, you will be interviewed four times throughout the school year. These interviews will be audiotaped. In these interviews I will ask you about events in your life and your thoughts about them. I may look at your scrapbook work and write about it. I ask you questions about your participation in the club and about your stories. At the end of the year we will have a focus-group interview with all the club participants. You can skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering. I will also take notes regarding club meetings and club interactions.

You do not have to be in this study. No one will be mad at you if you decide not to do this study. Even if you start the study, you can stop later if you want. You may ask questions about the study at any time. You may quit the study and still be in the club.

If you decide to be in the study I will not tell anyone else how you respond or act as part of the study. Even if your parents or teachers ask, I will not tell them about what you say or do in the study.

Any data from the project will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. You will receive a copy of the audio recordings and transcripts of your interview. All other audio recordings will be erased at the end of the study and any written data will be shredded.

Signing here means that you have read this form or have had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study.

Signature of participant_____

Participant's printed name _____

Participant's age: _____

Signature of investigator_____

Date_____

ASU IRB
Approved
Sign SM
Date 12/4/12 - 12/3/13

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am interested in the story of your life. You are going to be the storyteller for your own life. We will work together to tell the story of your past, present and future. Everyone's life is different, and everyone makes sense of their life differently. As a researcher I am interested in your experiences and how you view them. I am trying to understand who you are, and I hope to share that information with people who want to improve schools and opportunities for young people.

In telling your story, you do not need to tell us everything that has ever happened to you. You should focus on the happenings in your life that you think are significant. Your story should tell how you are similar to other people and how you are unique. If you are uncomfortable answering any of my questions, you do not have to answer. This is your story and you are the author of it!

Life Chapters

Think about your life as a story. All stories have characters, scenes, plots, and so forth. There are high points and low points, good times and bad, heroes and villains. A long story often has chapters. Think about your life as having chapters. What would those chapters be?

I would like you to describe the main chapters of your life story. Give each chapter a name and describe briefly the overall contents of the chapter (like a plot summary).

Background information

I would like some basic information to help fill out your story. You may have already given me some of this information—it isn't necessary to repeat yourself.

- Age
- Country of Origin
- Birthday/year of birth
- Ethnicity/Family background
- Who do you include in your immediate family? i.e. Parents, stepparents, grandparents, siblings, other close relatives
- Places you have lived
- Schooling

- Pseudonym

Critical Events

I am going to ask you about **7** specific life events. For each event:

- Describe what happened
- Where you were
- How old you were
- Who was involved
- What you did
- What you were thinking and feeling in the event
- What does the event say about who you are?

Event #1: High Point

A high point in your life story is a moment or episode in which you experienced positive emotions like joy, excitement, great happiness, or even "inner peace." The moment might stand out as one of the best, highest, most wonderful moments in your life story.

Event #2: Low Point

This is a point in your life story when you felt negative emotions, life despair, terror, guilt, sadness. Even though this memory might be unpleasant, try to be as honest and detailed as you can.

Event #3: Turning Point

Turning points are times of substantial change. I am interested in a turning point <u>about your understanding of yourself</u>.

Event #4: Earliest Memory

Choose a relatively clear memory from your earliest years and describe it in some detail. It does not need to seem especially significant—just one of your first memories. It should be detailed enough to qualify as an "event."

Event #5: Important Childhood Scene

This can be something that stands out as especially important or significant in your childhood (before middle school and high school). It might be positive or negative.

Event #6: Important Adolescent Scene

This is an important event from middle school or high school. Your story is still unfolding, and you will have many more experiences in high school. Try to pick something from your experience so far.

Life Challenge

Thinking back over the general story of your life, describe the greatest challenge you have faced in your life.

- How did you handle this challenge?
- Did other people help you in facing this challenge?
- How has this challenge had an impact on your life story?

Language and Education

Next we are going to talk about how language and schooling fit into your story.
If you are not a native English speaker, describe what it was like to learn English.
Include:

- How old you were when you started to learn English
- If anyone else in your family knew or was learning English
- Where did most of your learning happen?
- Do you associate learning English with positive or negative emotions, or is it a neutral experience?

- What has English language learning been like in school?
- How does being bilingual shape who you are?
- Are there certain times when you use English, and certain times you use Spanish?
- In which language can you best describe your emotions?
- What is a positive experience you have had being bilingual?
- What is a negative experience you have had being bilingual?
- Are there advantages/disadvantages to being bilingual?

Describe what your experience has been like in school.

- What different school experiences have you had (types of schools, location, etc.)?
- What do you think the purpose of school is?
- What are one or two things you wish your teachers knew about you that they don't?
- Describe a class or experience where you learned a lot in school. What was it like?
- Describe a class or experience where you struggled to learn. What was it like? What could have been different to make it better?
- What type of opportunities have you had to express yourself in school—your stories, viewpoints, feelings, ideas, or personal knowledge?
- How is school doing a good job preparing you for your desired future? How could it be better?

Alternate Futures

Now that you have told me a little but about your past, I would like you to consider the future. Imagine two different futures for your life story.

- Positive Future
- Negative Future

Wrapping Up

- Do you think you will change a great deal in the years to come?
- What sort of changes would you predict?
- Is there anything else I should know about your life story?
- Is there anything you would like to add or correct that we have already talked about?

APPENDIX D

APPARENT INTERVIEW STRATEGIES: PERFORMANCE

Participant	Interview strategies	Possible interview goals
Allison	Utilize themes associated with schooling (academics, bullying)	Demonstrate the identity of good student, i.e. give teacher the answers she is looking for
	Provide as much information as possible	
Angie	Place narrative in context of her family history; i.e. provide background for why she is who she is	Tell a good story
	Flesh out characters in her narrative to reinforce intended message (good people vs. bad people)	Demonstrate identity to an adult as intelligent, kind and motivated
	Verbalize clear themes, interpretations, and consejos to reinforce intended message	Refine story for future tellings
Marie	Give explicit descriptions of identity (I am…) or interpretations of events	Have a new experience, learn new viewpoints
	Anticipate what answers are desired and provide the "correct answers;" qualify viewpoints she may not fully agree with	Compare self to peers, i.e. refine self-conception as "atypical" vs. "normal"
	Change the subject	Maintain control of narrative presented
	Ask her own questions	Talk through ideas about past and future, get feedback
	Challenge questions themselves	
Deborah	Resist questions themselves	Fulfill an obligation
	Be brief in response to possible identity challenges	
Julia	Carefully construct responses to control the narrative	Assist a teacher
	Allude to specific problems that teenagers might experience, but keep stories about her own life vague and positive	Build confidence, communication skills
		Take an opportunity to reflect
Elizabeth	Have a strong narrative with explicit descriptions of identity (I am…)	Demonstrate an identity as self-assured and outgoing
	Address possible identity challenges with humor	Practice new "adult" identity rather than "high school student"
	Embrace parts of identity others might think are "lame"	

APPENDIX E

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES/CHAPTERS

Participant	Recurrent themes	Organizing principle	Chapter contents
Allison	• schooling • family	school years	• Chapter 1: Little brother born (age 3, past) • Chapter 2: Started Headstart, kindergarten (past) • Chapter 3: 1st-2rd grade (past) • Chapter 4: 3rd grade (past) Allison did not finish breaking life into chapters--each chapter was getting too detailed, so we moved on in the interview. Her narration continued from elementary school to high school
Angie	• family • personal integrity • academic achievement	lifespan development into a good person	• Chapter 1: Start to grow up, go to kindergarten, move to US to get a better future, how it "all started" in kindergarten (past) • Chapter 2: Story of mother and father's courtship, moving to the US, "the story of my family" (past) • Chapter 3: "Getting to know a little bit about who you are," changed to "who guides me" (past) • Chapter 4: The leader (present, future)
Marie	• family • action vs. passivity • life is multifaceted	before and after mother's revelation about father	Chapter 1: Birth, elementary school, birth of younger brother, growing up with father (past) Chapter 2: Realization they (mother and siblings) were staying in Arizona (past) Chapter 3: Knowing truth about father and how she "should" feel (middle school to high school, past to present)
Deborah	• death	generalized personal change/schooling	Chapter 1: Start at age 3, general happenings (past) Chapter 2: Middle school, learning about self and others (past) Chapter 3: First two years of high school, personal change (past) Chapter 4: Junior year and part of senior year, changing interests/life plans (past) Chapter 5: End of senior year, beginning of college, changing interests/life plans (present, future)

Julia	• family • communicating with others • academic achievement	life has all been background, leading up to senior year	Chapter 1: Parents meeting, having 3 children, birth and early childhood (pre-birth, past) Chapter 2: Begin schooling, elementary through middle school (past) Chapter 3: High school (past) Chapter 4: Graduation and related events (present, future) Chapter 5: 18th birthday and beginning college (future)
Elizabeth	• social risk taking • friendships • changing who you are	development of social self/friendships	Chapter 1: "Alyssa" (best friend in kindergarten, past) Chapter 2: Middle school, shift toward extroversion (past) Chapter 3: Freshman year high school, beginning dance (past) Chapter 4: First year in dance company (past) Chapter 5: "Lupita" (best friend in dance company, sophomore year, past) Chapter 6: "Julia and Deborah" (best friends outside dance company, junior year, past) Chapter 7: Senior year, transition out of high school/childhood (present)

APPENDIX F

GROUP AFFILIATION AND GROUP NON-AFFILIATION

Affiliation: Groups identified with (e.g. we, us)

	Groups identified with		
Participant	Family	Peers	Society
Allison	Nuclear family Extended family Allison and brother Allison and mom Allison and dad	Girls who got her into trouble Current classmates	None mentioned
Angie	Nuclear family Extended family (dad's side) Angie and siblings Angie and cousins Angie, mom and siblings	AVID (college readiness program) High school students Scrapbooking Club	Hispanics Non-drug users People living in the United States
Marie	Nuclear family (mom and siblings) Marie and sister	Former classmates (elementary school) Teenagers/youth generally Various club membership Social Justice club	Marie and myself (the interviewer) "Civilian world" Military Society/humankind
Deborah	Nuclear family Deborah and sister	None mentioned	None mentioned
Julia	Nuclear family (parents and sister) Julia and sister	Classmates (freshman) Classmates (IB/honors classes) Friends At risk teenagers*	None mentioned
Elizabeth	None mentioned	Dance company Friendship groups Students/teenagers	None mentioned

Non-affiliation: Groups positioned as “Other” (e.g. they, them)

	Groups positioned as other		
Participant	Family	Peers	Society
Allison	Father Father and uncle Parents Brother Cousin (teen mother)	Bullies Previous classmates Current classmates Disruptive classmates Peers generally	School authority Teachers People she meets, generally People with split families
Angie	Extended family (maternal) Extended family (paternal) Dad Mom Mom and Dad	None mentioned	Unnamed authority Teachers Parents American government Drug cartels in Mexico Hispanics Native English speakers People generally
Marie	Mom Brothers Extended family (higher SES)	Teenagers/youth generally Other study participants Autistic students Chess opponents Friends on Facebook	School authority People who disdain their jobs Military generally Veterans with PTSD Air traffic controllers
Deborah	Parents	Peers generally	Deceased friends/family Neighbors Teachers
Julia	Parents	Friends Bullies Students generally Peers (bad choices)	Neighbors Students (receiving college assistance) Student Council Club At risk teenagers*
Elizabeth	Nuclear family Grandparents Extended family (mom's side) Extended family (dad's side)	Friendship groups Unknown students Students (outside dance) Older dance members	Teachers Favorite music group

*Note: Julia made two comments when she "corrected" the pronouns she used. The first was a "they" to "we" correction, in the context of her and her friends who chose not to make bad choices: "Like my friends, they—we just choose not go that direction because we want to stay with our education and have a good life." The second correction was a "we" to "they" correction, and occurred when she was explaining that some teenagers have difficult home lives: "So that, students don’t just come to school, yeah, we come to learn, not just to socialize, but we—they’re trying to get away from other things." These categorizations have been listed in both with "identified with" and the "groups positioned as other" columns.

APPENDIX G

AVERAGE POSITIONING FLOWCHART

In the flow chart created to represent the "average" of all participants, identifying as an individual or part of a group occurred slightly more than positioning someone as other (Figure 6). Specifically, while all of the participants positioned peers, society and family as "other" to some extent (45%), most of the time participants classified themselves through identification as either an individual or part of a group (55%). On average, the most common positionings were identifying as an individual (i.e. *I* or *me,* 20%), identifying with family (22%) and, interestingly, identifying family as other (23%). This identity-through-categorization served to reify the explicit narrative told through specific events.

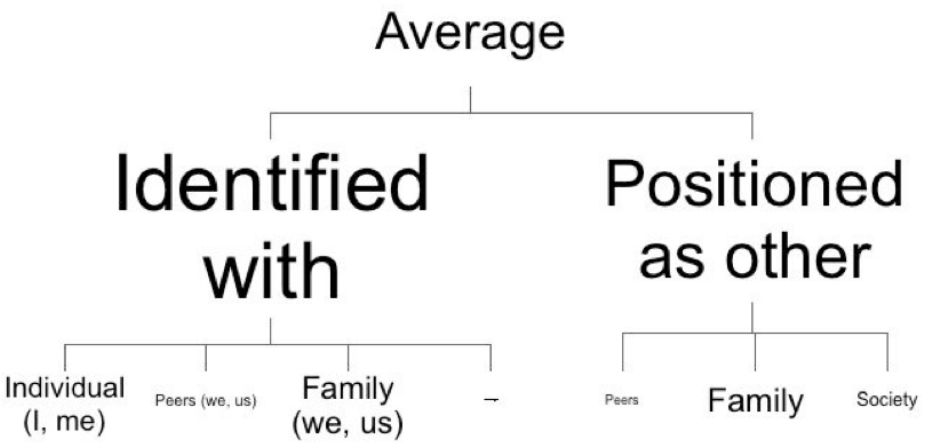


Figure 6. Average positioning flowchart across all participants

APPENDIX H

EXPLICIT STRATEGIES AND MAXIMS

Angie (25):

1. The only person who could disrespect you is yourself
2. Everybody is different
3. You can't judge a book by its cover
4. You have to see their actions to see who they really are
5. You can never judge your own parents
6. We can't judge people, they could only judge themselves
7. You have to see it to talk about it, not just talk about it if you don't see it
8. Don't believe what they are saying
9. You are the person you want to be, not what they want you to be
10. Always ask why are they doing this… you don't have to be mad about it, you have to learn why, ask why
11. I'm pushing you hard because I know you can do better
12. Now you may hate me and everything, but you're going to thank me later on
13. You've got to open your eyes and always live your days, because you only live once
14. At last, you laugh at the end
15. She made mistakes but she learned from her mistakes
16. You're going to be better when you want to be better, you don't have to do it because of other people. Do it for yourself.
17. Don't take it as a joke, this is serious, this is your life
18. The whole time I have to depend on them to grab my hand, I have to grab my hand by myself, and grow up to be someone better
19. Learn from the past, and live in today, and plan for the future
20. You have to work hard to get things right
21. If you want to change, nobody makes you change, you have to change on your own
22. It depends on the situation, if you deserve a second chance of not
23. It's really going to be hard, but it's going to be worth it
24. If you don't learn it right, it's a waste of your money and your time
25. It's not them, it's the people who buy the things from them

Amber (6)

1. You take it one day at a time, you just have to try it first, and if it works, you just keep going with it
2. They can't live forever
3. Live the good ole American life
4. Don't let the negative things get to you so much
5. Just do it
6. Teenagers learn from their mistakes

Julia (1)

1. I'm not into the whole, oh, I'm going fight you if you say something about me, it's more like, I'm going to ignore you and kill you with kindness

Deborah (2)

1. Nothing is forever
2. It's my little world, but now it's all—other people are involved now, and there's more to--there's more going on than myself

Marie (3)

1. You really don't know how you are unless someone observes you, it's like you can't diagnose yourself
2. If it's something you love, doing it is not work, you never work a day in your life
3. Wear the uniform and be proud of it

Allison (7)

1. Never feel better than a person, because you never know, maybe you guys could switch places
2. You don't have to worry about working or nothing, you only have to worry about school
3. Life goes too fast so don't worry too much
4. Two languages is like two persons, like, you are worth two persons
5. We could live in a little poor house but we could still be happy
6. Do you have everything? But don't you want more? I don't think it's bad wanting more, so I think you should keep studying

APPENDIX I

APPARENT LIFE STRATEGIES: THE FUTURE

Participant	Long term "life" goals	Imagined negative futures	Life strategies	
Allison	College Career Car ownership Live close to parents Help others Nice house Possible family	Get pregnant "Get a job that might not be that good" "Not live in a great house"	Avoid trouble Be friendly Don't ask questions Don't judge others Focus on goals	Listen to parents Take help from others Use negative role models Work hard
Angie	College Career Citizenship (DREAM Act) Financial security Family	"Getting married!" (jokingly) "When my parents leave us" (death)	Don't judge others Financial independence Focus on goals Focus on the positive Humor	Learn from mistakes Listen to parents Stay celibate/single Take help from others Work hard Judge others
Marie	Vocational school Military Possibly college (GI Bill) Financial security Pride and recognition Help others Keep learning Enjoy career/job	"Won't get through diesel mechanic school" Live with mom or be homeless	Active/involved Caution Financial independence	Identify what people want from you Look for positives Open mindedness
Deborah	no data	no data	Caution Don't get too attached	Empathy
Julia	Job/college Career Nice house Give back to parents Possible family Keep learning	No college Minimum wage employment Live with parents	Avoid conflict Be friendly Build confidence Caution Do your best Financial independence Focus on goals	Focus on the positive Know the odds Make healthy decisions Self-motivation Take chances Take help from others
Elizabeth	College International travel Career Financial security Family "American Dream"	Graduate from college but can't find a job Minimum wage employment Not financially secure enough to have a family	Active/involved Be friendly Financial independence Focus on goals Focus on the positive	Humor Nurture social connections Take chances Take help from others Try multiple strategies

APPENDIX J

PURPOSE OF SCHOOL

Allison	Yeah, help you, in the future.	Future success, general
Angie	I think the purpose of school is like, like, it's like, learn from the past, and live in today, and plan for the future. Yeah. Or it's like, learn from your mistakes, correct them, and then plan for the future, as in better...Yeah. I think that's what school is about. It's like, guiding you somewhere, it's like guiding you to become someone better than other, than other people that didn't have the chance, to become, something... I'm guessing it's learning, like learning the career that you're going to be involved in, because if you don't learn it right, it's a waste of your money and your time. And putting the effort, that's what it is.	Character development Career exploration
Julia	To educate students. Help them communicate with others. And just get them used to the idea of how everything else is, like getting a job, and then getting a job and going to school and working.	Educate, general Communication skills Adapt to societal norms (college, jobs, etc.)
Elizabeth	I think it's just so, we can make it, and have jobs, and make it on our own afterwards, and I think it's also so we can learn to be social with different people while we're doing it.	Future success, general Independence Communication skills
Marie	School? To, ah, teach you, subjects you need to learn, as far as the government. And, after you learn that, you get a test… pretty much school is just to identify if you're smart enough in the real world. I don't know. I think. I think, so like they give you a test, and then you get a job. Yeah, well, actually, I change that. School helps you learn the basis of the different subjects like math, reading and writing.	Citizenship Adapt to societal norms (testing, sorting mechanisms, etc.) Content related knowledge/skills