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### **Relationships Between Working Class, First Generation College Students and Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s): A Phenomenological Study on the Impacts Of Middle Class Socialization**

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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The Graduate School

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORKING-CLASS, FIRST-GENERATION  
COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S):  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACTS  
OF MIDDLE-CLASS SOCIALIZATION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Department of Leadership, Policy and Development:  
Higher Education and P-12 Education  
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

December 2021

This Dissertation by: Lindsay Ellen Mason

Entitled: *Relationships Between Working-Class, First-Generation College Students and Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s): A Phenomenological Study on the Impacts of Middle-Class Socialization*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in Department of Leadership, Policy and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership.

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## ABSTRACT

Mason, Lindsay. *Relationships Between Working-Class, First-Generation College Students and Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s): A Phenomenological Study on the Impacts of Middle-Class Socialization*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2021.

This constructionist phenomenological dissertation study explored stories from nine working-class, first-generation college students, specifically how middle-class socialization on a four-year university campus located in the Mountain West region of the United States impacts the relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s). My primary research question was: How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)? My sub-research questions were: What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship? And what role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship? I used Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theory and Hurst's (2010) Loyalist, Renegade, and Double Agent study as the two main theoretical frameworks for this study. For data collection, I use semi-structured interviews, a researcher diary, and a panel of experts from the research site. My data analysis revealed eight significant shared stories amongst the participants. This manuscript style dissertation offers a deep dive into two of the findings, space and work ethic. Space was revealed as a class-influenced value. Space showed up as geographical space between family, privacy, such as having a private bedroom, and consistently sharing space with family to do chores together. Additionally, being a strong worker to be valued by both the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s), but difficult to

demonstrate through coursework. The working-class parent(s)/guardian(s) defined working hard as physical labor. It was difficult for their student to demonstrate that they are working hard when their work does not require physical exertion. My conclusion chapter includes a brief description of the remaining six shared stories: Being successful in college to make sure their parent(s)/guardian(s)' sacrifices were worth it, particularly if the parent/guardian immigrated to the United States; starting to value mental health; religious parent(s)/guardian(s) being nervous about their child being away from the church; transitioning from a strict household to an environment that encourages freedom of choice; transitioning from a high school where most of the students are of color to a predominantly white institution; and lastly, I found it significant that every participant was able to identify a specific program or service on campus that helped them be successful. Reflection questions and programmatic recommendations for higher education professionals are provided in the two manuscripts.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

First-generation college students, sometimes referred to as first-in-family (FiF; O’Shea, et al., 2017) are defined as students whose parents have not earned a bachelor’s degree (Cataldi et al., 2018). Today, the U.S. Department of Education estimates approximately 33 percent of undergraduate students attending college are first-generation students (Cataldi et al., 2018). First-generation college students are less likely than their continuing-generation peers to complete their degree, at only 50 percent within six years compared to 64 percent, respectively (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016). Many first-generation students seek higher education in order to improve career opportunities, gain economic prosperity and upward social mobility (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

Higher education in the United States was created, in part, to prepare its students (all white men in the beginning) to be leaders in their communities (church, families, business, etc.), which included instilling middle-class based values (Hurst, 2012; Rudolph, 1990). This assimilation into the middle-class continues today. Locke and Trolan (2018) argue that college campuses have simply shifted away from overt class assimilation practices to implicit practices such as the unwritten expectations of wearing the “right” clothing or using the “right” terms or language (p. 69).

While first-generation college students often come from working-class backgrounds and are attending college to learn skills that will help them attain a good paying job, there can be negative consequences while working towards upward social mobility. Brooks-Terry (1988)

identified a “double assignment” where first-generation college students are required to not only learn their course material but also the values and life-style of the middle-class college campus (p. 123). “In order to achieve his or her career goals, the student must reject the values of home, peers, and neighborhood, and take on the attitudes and behaviors associated with the work world he or she wishes to enter” (Brooks-Terry, 1988, p. 123). If a student is successful in adopting the values of a middle-class college campus, friction with their parent(s)/guardian(s) is “inevitable” (Brooks-Terry, 1988, p. 131). Brooks-Terry (1988) explains that the parent(s)/guardian(s) of first-generation college students may be excited and proud their student is going to be a manager, but they may become frustrated when their student acts like a manager. Gos (1995) argues, “we have created an environment where a student’s severing of the ties with his or her [working-class] background becomes either a prerequisite to, or result of, success in school” (p. 31).

Research focusing on the experiences of first-generation college students is deep and explores many aspects of their experience (Choy, 2001; Pascarella et al., 2004; Ward et al., 2012). Almost all the research is focused on students’ experience on the college campus, and rarely explores how they are experiencing their home life, or their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s). My research aims to add to the limited research focused on first-generation, working-class college students’ experiences off campus, specifically with their parent(s)/guardian(s).

My research occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a unique period in contemporary history. Most university campuses in the U.S. switched to a completely or mostly online learning/remote learning model in spring 2020 and remained online/remote through spring 2021. Some students remained in their residence hall or on-campus apartment, some remained in their off-campus residence with unrelated roommates or other non-parent/guardian roommates, and

some remained or moved back home with their parent(s)/guardian(s). This unique learning period means many working-class, first-generation students had the option to fully or partly engage with their higher education institution from the same household where they interact with their parent(s)/guardian(s), a possible forced mixing of two-worlds. My study provides timely feedback to higher education administrators about this experience and specific recommendations for improved practices.

### **Key Terms**

**First-Generation College Student.** The definition of a first-generation college student in previous research varies. Some definitions are vague, such as the definition used by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Educational Sciences, "the share of students enrolled in postsecondary education whose parents have not attended college" (Cataldi et al., 2018, p. 1). This definition, shared amongst other researchers including Lubrano (2004), appears to exclude any student whose parent(s) or guardian(s) attended college for any period of time, thereby defining them as a continuing-generation student, a student who has at least one parent or guardian that obtained a bachelor's degree, a clear mismatch and consequence of this vague definition.

Other researchers (Carnevale & Fry, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998) use a more detailed definition that specifies a first-generation college student as being a student wherein neither parent obtained a bachelor's degree. These researchers also identified these students as being of traditional college age.

Throughout this literature review, the term first-generation college student will vary by the researcher. For the purposes of my research and sample, I defined a first-generation college student as a student of any age whose parent(s) nor guardian(s) have not obtained

a bachelor's degree. This includes students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) attended college (2-year or 4-year) for any period of time but did not obtain a degree, parent(s)/guardian(s) who obtained an associate degree, and parent(s)/guardian(s) who attended and obtained a degree from a trade school. The variations my definition includes may have impacted my results, because students may have received different levels or types of support, so their parent(s)/guardian(s) postsecondary education experience is included in the participant descriptions.

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s).** I purposefully use parent(s)/guardian(s) in my research to acknowledge some students are raised by one parent, two parents, or multiple sets of parents; some students are raised by legal guardian(s) who are not a biological parent; and some students are raised by guardian(s) who are not legally defined as such, but show up, take care of, and support the student regularly. I want to also acknowledge there are other circumstances not included in this research such as students who were raised in the foster system and do not identify as having any parent/guardian, and students whose identified parent(s)/guardian(s) are now deceased.

**Social Class/Class.** Class is much more than income, and while class or social class is a commonly used identifier, it is a focus in this study and thus warrants a description. "Culture truly is lived; it is created and recreated on a daily basis and the elements of culture combine in ways unbeknown to its creators" (Weis, 1985, p. 129). Lubrano (2004) explains how class influences every aspect of our lives. In offering a long list of how class influences everything around us, it becomes apparent how class is inescapable, and always present.

Class is a script, map, and guide. It tells us how to talk, how to dress, how to hold ourselves, how to eat, how to socialize. It affects whom we marry; where we live; the

friends we choose; the jobs we have; the vacations we take; the books we read; the movies we see; the restaurants we pick; how we decide to buy houses, carpets, furniture, and cars; where our kids are educated; what we tell our children at the dinner table (conversations about the Middle East, for example, versus the continuing sagas of the broken vacuum cleaner or the half-wit neighbors); whether we even have a dinner table, or a dinnertime. In short, class is nearly everything about you. And it dictates what to expect out of life and what the future should be. (p. 5)

Barratt (2011) writes about three different class identifications, specifically class of origin, current class, and class others assume we identify with. Our class or origin is the social class we were raised within; our current class is the social class we currently identify within, which is commonly the same but may be different than our class or origin; and there is also the class identification others place on us (Barratt, 2011). Some may be able to pass for a different class, if they choose and have the skills or capital to do so (Barratt, 2011).

**Working-Class.** Soria et al. (2013) explain, “identification as working-class is not based solely on one’s occupation or income, but instead on workplace power dynamics, conception of position in society, and familial/cultural values, history, and narratives” (p. 215). A single working definition of “working-class” does not exist, and I allowed students to choose if they identify as working-class rather than placing my own understanding of working-class on their lived experience to determine their class identity.

I anticipated some students being unsure about their class identity, so I provided some questions and life experiences for them to consider (Appendix A). This list included consideration of the type of work their parent(s)/guardian(s) perform (physical labor/blue collar, non-physical labor/white collar); how much control their parent(s)/guardian(s) have over their work versus how much is determined for them; financial markers, such as qualifying for governmental assistance; minimum life standards they hold (having health



insurance, always getting new clothes for each new school year, etc.); lifestyle expectations around wellbeing (taking vacation from work, traveling for vacation, prioritizing mental health); whether their family owns or rents their home and if they live in a multigenerational household or with extended family.

Based on my research and lived experiences within the working-class, I define someone to be working-class if they identify with the majority of the following: Holding a job that is physically laborious and having little control of their schedule, work duties, and defining success within their position; qualifying for some level of governmental assistance with some choosing to use it and others choosing not to because of pride; renting their home, or owning their home with it being the one physical asset they hold, and possibly living with extended family; and not being able to prioritize physical or mental wellbeing, take vacations, or consider health insurance a basic need. Similarly to first-generation college student above, because class definitions vary and students decided if they identify as working-class, their reasons for identifying as such are included in the participant descriptions.

**Middle-Class.** Middle-class and working-class are not simply defined along a clear continuum and are not in opposition to one another. Bernstein (1971) describes the middle-class as the managerial-class, because their work likely includes managing human capital, having more autonomy within their work, and having more control in defining success or how to get their work done. Middle-class is more than having enough money to afford basic needs and some luxuries, it is also about minimum life expectations. A middle-class family may expect (notably different than hope) that their child(ren) attend college, participate in career exploration rather than a job search, and secure a position that does

not involve physical labor and allows their child(ren) to manage their wellbeing through sick time, paid time off, and offering health insurance. Similarly to working-class, there is huge variety in how middle-class looks for different people.

### **Problem Statement**

First-generation, working-class college students often say they are attending college not just for themselves, but for their entire family (Wartman, 2009). Higher education is seen as the vehicle to upward social mobility, to do better, but it also comes with the expectations that one leaves their class of origin behind to better fit in with the middle-class (Ardoin & martinez, 2019; Borrego, 2008; Reay, 2005). If higher education as an institution actively engages in the process of socializing these students into the middle class, there is a risk of students developing poor relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) and leaving school because their motivation for attending college (family) is being harmed in the process. Even if a first-generation, working-class student does persist and graduate from college, colleges must consider their ethical responsibility of preparing students for a potential negative impact on their relationship with their parent(s)/guardian(s) as a result of their educational process.

### **Study Purpose**

In qualitative research, the research question(s) are a reflection of the epistemology and methodology chosen for the study (Alase, 2017). Trede and Higgin (2009) emphasize the importance of recognizing research questions are not objective or apolitical, rather they reflect “values, world view and direction of an inquiry” (p. 18). Creswell (2003) recommends qualitative researchers ask only one or two main research questions, followed by no more than five to seven sub-research questions, and all of the questions remain open-ended and do not reference theory or literature, unless demanded by a specific inquiry strategy.

The purpose of this study was to explore how, if at all, a relationship between a first-generation, working-class student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is influenced by the student attending college, with a specific emphasis on exploring if class socialization is one of the factors impacting this relationship. Literature tells us college students at 4-year institutions are encouraged to take on middle-class values, which are often in contrast with working-class values.

My primary research question was:

- Q1 How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

My sub-research questions were:

- Q2 What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship?
- Q3 What role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship?

### **Study Significance**

First-generation college students continue to make up a large portion of today's college students (Cataldi et al., 2018), and their success continues to lag behind their continuing-generation peers (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016). Higher education administrators must explore new methods to support these students during college and through to graduation. First-generation, working-class or poor-class students often cite upward social mobility as one of the main reasons for attending college (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). Students from working-class or poor-class backgrounds enroll in higher education where they are being influenced to adopt middle-class values, which causes tension with their parent(s)/guardian(s) who hold working-class values (Brooks-Terry, 1988).

Research shows positive relationships with parents has a positive impact on a student's academic success. Shannon et al. (2015) found students having positive, quality relationships with their parent(s) was related to the student practicing more self-regulation, or the ability to maintain goal pursuit. This resulted in students being more committed to their academics and being more engaged both inside and outside of the classroom. Johnson (2016), through her study of low-income, single African American mothers and their college daughters, found the mother's significant investment in their relationship with their daughter resulted in their child's desire for academic success. Furthermore, the mother's desire to support their daughter grew, as opposed to decreasing, when the student went to college. Both the quality and quantity of parent-interaction have been found to impact a first-year student's emotional well-being (Sax & Weintraub, 2014). Parents' relationships and behaviors have even been shown to influence a student's drinking behavior once they start college (Mallett et al., 2011; Small et al., 2011).

First-generation college students often say they are attending college not just for themselves, but for their families, that their success is not individual success, but collective success for their family (Wartman, 2009). And while most of these students are attending college to get a better paying job, or experience upward social mobility, it is important to make a distinction between wanting to improve one's "material situation" versus wanting to adopt middle-class values (Hurst, 2010, p. 129). "Although upward mobility poverty-class people may welcome the reversal of economic poverty, the culture of poverty is not impoverished" (Langston, 1993, p. 72).

If attending college can potentially cause tension between the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are a significant part of their motivation for attending college, higher education institutions could lose students who choose to prioritize a

positive relationship with their family over finishing their college degree. If a student does persist through classes, the harmed relationship can impact their academic success. Exploring the relationships between first-generation, working-class students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is essential to understanding a graduation barrier that may exist for this population.

### **Chapter Summary and Overview of Chapters**

This first chapter introduced the problem at hand, how working-class, first-generation college students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) may be negatively impacted by their university's middle-class socialization process. I stated my research questions, with one primary and two sub-research questions. I described the importance of the problem, that first-generation college students often cite their parent(s)/guardian(s) as their main reason for wanting to attend college thus universities have an obligation to lessen the negative impact on these relationships to remove a potential barrier to graduation for these students. I defined key terms that will be operationalized in my research, specifically first-generation college student, parent(s)/guardian(s), social class/class, middle-class, and working-class.

My second chapter includes my literature review, which highlights the areas of research that informed my research, and theoretical frameworks. I have two main theoretical frameworks and two supporting frameworks that influenced my research and specifically influenced my research methods. My third chapter reviews my constructionism epistemology, my chosen methodology of phenomenology, and my choice to use interviews as my data collection methods. I detail my participants, data analysis, how I ensured my research is reliable and truthful, my researcher stance, ethical considerations for this research, and how COVID-19 impacted my research. My fourth and fifth chapter are two drafted manuscripts where I thoroughly explore two of my research findings, specifically how space and working hard are

defined and valued by different classes. My last chapter briefly describes my other findings, my plans for future research, and some reflections on this dissertation process.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II includes my literature review and theoretical frameworks. My literature review includes research from education and sociology, specifically reviewing working-class and middle-class values, how a university socializes its students into the middle-class, and the theme of first-generation college students experiencing an impact on their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) once starting college. My research is primarily framed by two theories, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth and Hurst's (2010), Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents. I also acknowledge my understanding of class has been influenced by Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital (including additional forms added by Barratt (2011)), and Liu's (2011) Social Class Worldview Model.

This literature review includes research addressing the differences in working-class and middle-class values, concrete examples of how university campuses socialize students into the middle-class, and the sparse research on relationships between parent(s)/guardian(s) and their first-generation college students. The literature review will demonstrate the necessity of understanding the difference in middle-class and working-class values, how a university campus forces middle-class values on its students, and the brief research available has shown that first-generation college students experience a negative impact in their relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s) once they start attending college. My research helps fill in the gap in seeking to determine if the middle-class socialization is one factor in the negative impact on these relationships.

## Literature

### **First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students Demographics**

The U.S. Department of Education estimates 33 percent of students working towards an undergraduate degree are first-generation college students (Cataldi et al., 2018). NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and Suder Foundation's Center for First-Generation Student Success, using data from the 2015-2016 academic year, explore a variety of statistical differences between first-generation and continuing-generation college students. When considering only dependent students, first-generation college students have a median parental income of \$41,000 compared to a continuing-generation student's median parental income of \$90,000 (RTI International, 2019a). There are more first-generation college students of color, specifically Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and National Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, than continuing-generation students of color (RTI International, 2019a). First-generation college students work a median of 20 hours per week, compared to 12 hours per week by their continuing-generation peers, and were more likely to work off campus (RTI International, 2019c).

Two national research centers report different measurements for completion rates for first-generation college students. The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2016) reported first-generation college students are less likely than their continuing-generation peers to complete their degree, at only 50 percent within six years compared to 64 percent, respectively. The Center for First-Generation Student Success reports 49% of continuing-generation college students attain a bachelor's degree within 6 years of enrollment in postsecondary education, compared to 20% of first-generation college students (RTI International, 2019b).



## **Working-Class and Middle-Class Values**

Explicitly stating some of the differences between working-class and middle-class values is necessary. Through my research, I found it was assumed the reader would know the difference. The importance of there being a difference is stated or emphasized often, but clearly showing what the differences are was more difficult to find.

“Members of different social classes, by virtue of enjoying (or suffering) different conditions of life, come to see the world differently - to develop different conceptions of social reality, different aspirations and hopes and fears, different conceptions of the desirable” (Kohn, 1964, p. 471). To be clear, these values are not true for every person within a specific class. There are certainly individual and family differences, and there are some folks who can hold values more commonly associated with either class. These values provide a general framework, an overarching understanding of some value differences that are common between working-class and middle-class folks.

While working-class and middle-class parents share some values in their children such as honesty (Kohn, 1964), there are notable differences in values that have been observed and remain true through decades of research. Working-class parents, specifically those working manual labor jobs, value different behavior demonstrations by their children in comparison to middle-class parents working non-manual labor jobs (Kohn, 1964). Middle-class parents want their children to be excited about learning, to be happy, to share, and to be healthy while working-class parents want their children to be tidy, to obey adults, and to please adults (which could be translated to obeying and pleasing authority), what Duvall (1946) referred to as developmental versus traditional values, respectively. Working-class parents value conformity to

external expectations and care that their children do not go against rules, while middle-class parents value self-direction and care about their children's motives (Duvall, 1946).

Kohn (1964) argues three main differences exist in working-class and middle-class jobs that result in parents in the different classes holding different values: Middle-class jobs require the manipulation of relationships and ideas, and working-class jobs require the manipulations of things; middle-class jobs require more self-direction and working-class jobs require following a strict set of rules; and lastly, middle-class jobs require independence to get ahead and working-class jobs require collective effort, or sometimes unionizing, to advocate for better pay and conditions. It is in-part because of these differences in occupational expectations parents pass down different values to their children (Kohn, 1964).

In *Class, Codes, and Control: Theoretical Studies towards Sociology of Language*, Bernstein (1971) describes the working-class social structure as position-oriented and the professional/managerial class, or middle-class, as person-oriented. The position-oriented family is rule-bound, where laws are decontextualized and are meant to be followed, and each family member plays a role regardless of their personhood. A working-class parent is told what to do at work, so they tell their children what to do at home, meaning they are teaching them the rules of the world and how to be successful at their future job. Peckham (1995) describes his father's language patterns by stating, "Language use in my home was characteristically unidirectional - our father telling us what to do. There was never room for discussion or negotiation; at best, we would ask questions, make requests, or defend ourselves" (p. 266). In person-oriented families, the parents are teaching their children to become their own person, to create their role, and to think for themselves.

Parents who teach deference, obedience, and constraint are indeed teaching valuable skills that will have a place in all adolescents' lives; however, when taught singularly

likely make it more difficult for adolescents to stand out or excel in academic and/or employment settings when skills such as assertiveness are rewarded and necessary. (Jones et al., 2018, p. 630)

Perhaps in what may seem in opposition to Kohn's (1964) assertion that middle-class and working-class families both value their children acting with honesty, Foley (1990) finds that middle-class families (and primary school teachers) teach and value impression management while working-class families value and teach more authentic communication. Foley described impression management as the ability to adapt to surroundings, to communicate in the most effective way for the specific audience, and to strategically engage in activities that will create success in a capitalist society (1990). This is not to say middle-class families or children value being fake, or lying, to be successful, but they demonstrate the ability (and value) to adapt, while working-class families value more directness, less strategic forms of communication that do not have a long-term end game.

Lauren H. Weaver, a faculty member from a Mennonite "hard worker" upbringing, writes about how the term "hard worker" was a compliment growing up in a community that values physical labor, particularly physical labor that is done for the benefit of your family or neighbor, but the same term holds negative connotations if used in the academy (Weaver, 1993). She explains that if someone in the academy is seen as a hard-worker, they are viewed as, "a drudge or unimaginative, passive, confirming person - someone who will serve on routine committees and organization conferences. This person, too, is often exploited" (Weaver, 1993, p. 120).

### **Middle-Class Socialization on Campus**

Working-class students enrolling in higher education will experience a class re-socialization, specifically a forced assimilation into the middle-class. This socialization process is covert, occurring in and outside of the classroom. The identified socialization experiences in

this literature review goes beyond students recognizing class differences because of cultural references or clothes worn by their peers (Martin, 2015a, 2015b). This portion of my literature review will show that deliberate policies and expectations by higher education professionals have middle-class values in their roots. Research shows working-class students experience this socialization through the competitive and individualistic culture, language instruction, authoritarianism, organizational structures, and the encouragement or expectation they become independent from their family.

In *Hierarchy as a Theme in the US College: 1880 - 1920* (Ris, 2016), the author demonstrates that employers in the late 19th century were most compelled to hire employees (specifically men) who were willing to climb the ranks in their corporation, to start at the bottom and learn how to navigate the company's hierarchy. At the time, a university education was reserved for the elites, and according to employers, produced entitled men that would not be successful in hierarchical organizations. Ris (2016) argues that this critique, in part, drove colleges to become more hierarchical in nature, both in the curriculum (established first-year and sophomore curriculum, and more freedom in the "upper class" curriculum, and putting an increased emphasis on graduate education) and in co-curricular experiences (for example, hazing experiences for fraternity pledges). College graduates were thus able to demonstrate the ability to navigate a hierarchy (a hidden curriculum) and be hired as managers at private companies upon graduation (Ris, 2016). Wolff (1969), an American philosopher and professor emeritus from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, asserts this hidden curriculum continued by stating,

The real function of the Bachelor's degree in our society is certification, all right, but it is class certification, not professional certification. The B.A. stamps a man (sic) as a candidate in good standing for the middle class. It is the great social divider that distinguishes the working class from the middle class. (p. 151)

This hidden curriculum has only increased since.

As noted above by Lubrano (2004), class impacts and influences every decision we make. In an application more connected to college, Beagan (2005), talks about class as social and cultural capital,

involving expectations, future aspirations, support for the particular choices, role models, values, social networks, knowing the right people, having the right kind of hobbies, playing the right kinds of sports, knowing which is the right fork to use at a formal dinner, being able to make the right sort of small talk, having the right clothes, accent and demeanor. (pp. 779-780)

Class impacts all decisions students make on a college campus, if they make the “right” choice - the choice approved by the middle-class - or if they choose to stick with their working-class values when making their choice, or if they even recognize there is a “right” and “wrong” choice.

### ***Competitiveness and Individualism***

Students on a college campus compete with each other for success, to individually prove their knowledge through exams, and through securing resources that are, or at least appear to be, scarce such as internships, seats in a specific class, research opportunities with faculty members, and high-ranking letter grades (Lehmann, 2012). This goes against a working-class value mentioned above about working together for everyone’s success. “The competitiveness, hierarchy, and individualism of middle-class/school culture reflect the goals and values of capitalism as embodied in capitalism’s valued agents (the middle class) (Hurst, 2010, p. 103).

### ***Language***

Higher education values formal language, the language of the managerial-class, the language spoken and taught by middle-class parents, and works to correct public language, the language of the working-class (Bernstein, 1971). Public language is spoken between people who have a strong relationship (neighbors, family), where the history of the relationship provides enough context for each person to understand each other with minimal words. Formal language

assumes no prior relationship, no shared understanding, and is spoken with full sentences, clear descriptions, and verbal context is provided. Middle-class parents are more likely to speak this language because they were taught to do in school, and because they are more likely to interact with more audiences whom they do not know (travel, moving to different cities). They cannot rely on relationships to fill in the gaps in meaning. This language is then taught to their kids, which is the language that is valued in school. Public language relies on longer relationships, which is more likely in working-class families as generations are likely to live in the same community and work together. Formal language is understood in the fullness of the sentences, while public language is understood in the gaps (Bernstein, 1971). It is important to note “... students from the professional/managerial class are learning to think, speak, and write in ways that are reinforced by their homes and communities, while working-class students have to make significant breaks with their families’ and communities’ patterns of thought and language” (Peckham, 1995, p. 264).

### ***Authoritarianism***

Bernstein (1971) writes about working-class students being raised in households that are position-oriented, and middle-class students in person-oriented families. Gos (1995) takes this further by arguing that children raised in working-class families are disadvantaged when entering college because they were not taught to question authoritative figures, or to find supportive data for their personal argument. “But what may prove to be an even bigger obstacle is not what they were never taught to do, but what they were taught never to do” (Gos, 1995, p. 31). Working-class students were taught to never question their authoritative figures, their parent(s), because doing so was questioning not just the argument or statement but the person and the relationship held with that person (Gos, 1995). Professors reward students who formulate their own

arguments by seeking out supporting research, who engage as equals in classroom debates, but working-class students were taught to never question their teachers/professors and thus will default to agreeing with their professor's argument. The same argument could be made for student development theories such as Self-Authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998), that assumes students must move towards questioning authority.

### ***Organizational Structures***

Academic and social groups on campus use class-based hierarchies where there is a clearly defined ladder of power, such as a president and vice president (Barratt, 2011). These groups are a reflection of capitalistic hierarchies used to justify unequal distributions of power. College campuses are one institution where students practice fitting into these structures and are encouraged to aim for achieving more and more power within the organization.

### ***Independence From Family***

In interdependent cultures, of which a working-class student is more likely to identify with, there is an expectation (sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit) the student will remain connected, and contribute to, the family (Valdez, 1996). While in more independent cultures, a more common value held in middle-class families, there are expectations a student will go away for college and become independent from their parents (Markus & Kitayama, 2003). College campuses socialize students to value independence by recruiting out-of-state students, not allowing parent(s)/guardian(s) to attend orientation (or at least all of it) with their student, and through employing student development theories such as Self Authorship Theory (Baxter Magolda, 1998).

## **Relationships Between Parents/Families and Their First-Generation College Students**

Research on the role parents play in their first-generation student's academic success is not lacking (Demetriou et al., 2017; Dennis et al., 2005; Depew, 2012; Kilgo et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2020; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2014). Research focused on these students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s), commonly cited as their main reason or motivation for attending college in the first place, is sparse.

A study with similar research goals, but used Bourdieu's Habitus theory (1977), and a different research setting (elite, selective colleges), methodology (described as multimethod), and research participant qualifications (low-income, working-class, and lower-middle income, with first-generation or continuing-generation status not considered), was completed by Lee and Kramer (2013), through studying the "experience of nonelite students in elite colleges" (p. 19). Lee and Kramer asked two questions: "First, do upwardly mobile students experience conflict between nonelite home habitus and elite campus habitus? Second, if so, how are such conflicts managed?" (Lee & Kramer, 2013, p.21). The researcher's quantitative data showed fourth year students reported relatively low perceived loss of connection with home communities, but certain populations reported statistically significant higher levels of this perceived loss, specifically men, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families (Lee & Kramer, 2013). Qualitative data, collected only from women at an all women's college, revealed the students experienced conflict at home as a result of them developing new habits, language, interests, and perspectives while attending college (Lee & Kramer, 2013). The participants particularly noted they were surprised by the shift, that they thought they could simply be a working-class person who had a higher degree, and did not expect the necessity of leaving behind their working-class or low-income roots as they worked to be successful in college (Lee & Kramer, 2013). Lee and



Kramer (2013) argue these students experience both an “internalized and externalized program” (p. 29), that they experience an externalized tension in their home communities, and an internalized tension in how they view themselves and assess their own social position since attending college.

Lehmann’s (2012, 2014) study focuses on academically successful students from working-class backgrounds in a 4-year longitudinal research project at a Canadian university, and included one research question focused on the research participants’ relationships with their home communities by asking, “Has success changed their relationship to others, such as parents and former peers and friends” (Lehmann, 2012, p. 3)? Lehmann (2014) found participants started to feel a power shift between themselves and their parents, that their exposure to higher education created a different dynamic power at home. Lehmann found that academic success in college, which included integration into middle-class values, resulted in the students experiencing negative impacts on their relationships with parents and former friends, but also admits the study was limited to academically successful students and did not include students who may have used other coping mechanisms such as Hurst’s (2010) loyalist or double agent approach. Lehmann’s (2014) analysis focuses mostly on relationships with peers and friends, and less so on relationships with parents.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) in Wartman’s 2009 dissertation titled *Redefining Parental Involvement: Working Class and Low Income Students’ Relationships to Their Parents During Their First Semester of College*, described the parents having no, or very little, contact with the college but were very interested in what their student was doing on the campus or general information about the school. All of the parents had visited the campus, either in picking their student up, or in helping them move in. Wartman (2009) found parents felt they had to “let go”

of their child when they started college and also trusted their students to be successful, describing them as “responsible, mature, and independent” (p. 106). The parents also described their children as always being independent, so trusting their autonomy was not new for these parents. The students agreed they had felt independent their whole life. Wartman (2009) found some parents of first-generation college students do not want to call their student frequently for fear of being perceived as an overbearing parent, or too protective. The students welcomed the phone calls from their parents and wished they called more. Some parents thought their students called too often and were not focused on their schoolwork.

In two different studies, Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) found first-generation, Latino students experienced more family achievement guilt due to attending college when compared to their white, continuing-generation peers. The researchers found the guilt these students felt was more related to their immediate family than to general social inequality. Future research on how family achievement guilt impacts retention is recommended.

First-generation college students play significant roles in their families, including providing specific support for their parent(s). Covarrubias et al. (2019) found first-generation Latinx and Asian American students provide concrete support to their parents by supporting them emotionally and through advocacy, providing financial support, physically caring for them, offering life advice, watching over their siblings, and serving as a translator when their parents met with banks, insurance agents, or other service providers. Although university campuses encourage students to become independent from their families, these students expressed their journeys towards fulfilling their own goals as well as always playing a supportive role in their family of origin.

First-generation college students in Australia experienced a mix of familial impacts when they decide to go to college, regardless of age (O'Shea et al., 2017). Younger aged students and older students, which the researchers split between 21 and younger and 22 and older, had both supportive family members and family members who questioned their decision to attend college, giving up the ability to make a full-time income. One participant specifically noted her dad always encouraged her to be smart, but did not want her to talk about her studies, or what he calls "big school" (O'Shea et al., 2017, p. 108) while at home.

Lastly, I will highlight a dissertation completed by Turek (2012), that used Bowlby's (1988) Attachment Theory to study millennial first-generation college student relationships with their parents during their first year of attending a university. Turek found their participants' parents were supportive of them attending college, but could not provide a high level of social or cultural capital, thus students often turned towards other support systems for help including other family members and faculty and staff at their institution. Turek recommends further research into the dynamics of the parent/child relationship of first-generation college students.

### **Undocumented Families**

Rojas-Garcia (2013) studied "Generation 1.5", children who were born in another country and migrated to the United States during their formative years. Rojas-Garcia specifically studied students attending the University of California, Riverside, a Hispanic Serving Institution, who migrated from Mexico (2013). Rojas-Garcia explored students' path towards "becoming American" (p. 93) of which the U.S. educational system plays a significant role. Rojas-Garcia (2013) found the students' parents and family members were unable to participate in school activities due to long working hours and language barriers, but all were encouraging of their

student to succeed. Nicholas et al., (2008) found similar encouragement among their Haitian born students.

Romo et al. (2019) also found their research participants, all undocumented Mexican college graduates, saw going to college as a “long-standing aspiration” (p. 398) and they were able to attend because of their “dreams, hopes, and family support” (p. 398). Furthermore, they found students learned a hard work-ethic from their parents (Romo et al., 2019). Additionally, both Rojas-Garcia (2013) and Romo et al. (2019) all found participants wanted to go to college for their parents, to succeed in school because their families had immigrated to the United States to give their children more financial opportunities.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Community Cultural Wealth**

One of the primary theories informing my research is an asset-based class model, Community Cultural Wealth, from Yosso (2005). Yosso (2005) defines culture as “behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people” (p. 75). Yosso’s theory is informed heavily by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and branches of CRT including AsianCrit, FemCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit. Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) is an intentional critique of previously dominant class theories, including Bourdieu’s (1986) Forms of Capital. Yosso’s theory includes six forms of capital and is intentionally written to allow room for more capitals to be identified by using “at least 6 forms of capital” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77) language. Yosso’s (2005) six forms of capital are “aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant” (p. 77). This theory centers race and specifically identifies Communities of Color as the experts and informants for this theory.

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to remain hopeful for the future, even when presented with barriers or challenges (Yosso, 2005). Families teach their children to dream of possibilities, to hold onto their hopes, regardless of means of reaching those dreams. Families maintain high aspirations for their children's future, including education, and this value of having aspirations is passed down to their children. This form of capital makes me think of the term "DREAMers", referring to undocumented children who immigrated to the United States with their parents at a young age.

Linguistic capital is more than just learning multiple languages and includes the "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Learning multiple languages means learning storytelling skills, communicating through different types of art, reading an audience, cross-cultural awareness, and responsibility to family and society.

Familial capital refers to understanding the importance of community and how to care for one another (Yosso, 2005). Familial capital can be learned through immediate family members, and also through extended family and other connected communities such as church groups, sport teams, and other social groups (Yosso, 2005). Learning the importance of connectedness and cultural history informs "emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78).

Social capital may seem similar to Bourdieu's (1986) definition of social capital, but Yosso (2005) defines it as "networks of people and community resources" (p. 79) and continues with the importance of Communities of Color giving back to their networks through information sharing and resources they have gained through institutions such as education, health, legal, etc.

Social capital is both about the learning children absorb growing up and also about the importance of adding to the social capital and helping others learn as you learn (Yosso, 2005).

Navigational capital describes the skills to navigate social institutions, particularly institutions that were not built with Communities of Color in mind (Yosso, 2005). Navigating institutions based in racism as a person of color takes incredible skill, knowledge, community, and resilience (Yosso, 2005). This navigation happens through individual agency and through community building within the institution (Yosso, 2005).

Resistant capital refers to knowledge and skills learned that challenge inequality, seek to transform inequitable institutions, and challenge the status quo (Yosso, 2005). Parents of color explicitly teach their children to understand the structures of racism, engage in behavior that challenges systemic racism, and assert themselves as individuals worth of respect (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital is not separate from any of the forms mentioned previously (all forms are interconnected), but this form specifically uses all of the forms to work towards transformation (Yosso, 2005).

### **Loyalist, Renegades, and Double Agents**

My other primary theoretical framework informing this research is derived from Hurst's (2010) work in *The Burden of Academic Success*. Through interviewing 21 working-class students attending a large public university, Hurst (2010) found these students were choosing one of three different methods to manage the opposition between their working-class roots with the university's middle-class environment and expectations. Students were either choosing to be a loyalist, where they stayed connected to their working-class values and rejected the middle-class values forced on them by their peers, faculty, and the institution; a renegade where they were choosing to assimilate to the new middle-class values and reject their working-class roots to have

more opportunities for upward social mobility; or they were choosing to be a double agent where they moved between different social groups (with different class values) and adapted to their immediate current environment (Hurst, 2010).

“Students adopting a Loyalist position draw more sharp moral boundaries between themselves and middle-class people” (Hurst, 2010, p. 140). When these students were asked to describe the working class, they used positive descriptors such as “strong” and “able” and spoke about being hard working, how the working-class community works together, and how they have a strong sense of humor that can carry them through the obvious injustices in the world (p. 140). These students did not express any shame or embarrassment about being working-class. Loyalist students also describe their success as being both from luck and from hard work. They did not describe themselves as being more intelligent than their peers or family members.

Loyalists were keenly aware of how their college was trying to socialize them into the middle class. They made brief notes of experiencing tense relationships with their family members because of this, and thus intentionally rejected the middle-class socialization. They spoke about wanting better jobs but defined “better” as being about job security and safer working conditions, not as being more prestigious.

In opposition to loyalists, students identifying as Renegades drew boundaries between themselves and other working-class people (Hurst, 2010). When these students were asked to describe the working-class, they used negative descriptions such as “weak” and “inferior” (p. 141). They blamed their parents for not working hard enough and not planning well enough for the future. When Renegades were asked to describe those in the middle-class, they used positive descriptors such as “smart” and having the “right” attitudes (p. 142). Instead of recognizing injustices as forms of systemic oppression, these students used an individual lens, believing they

could overcome oppression through making more money. Furthermore, Renegades expressed shame and embarrassment for their working-class roots.

Renegade students were also aware of the different class values between middle-class and working-class, and intentionally worked to adopt middle-class values. They believe their families were poor by choice, and they could make the right choices, such as appearing more middle-class, to escape poverty. They too wanted to secure “better” jobs, which they defined as manager positions, positions with authority and more clout.

“Double Agents can be defined by their stark refusal to draw moral boundaries between themselves and another group” (Hurst, 2010, p. 144). These students describe both the working-class and middle-class as having positive attributes. Double Agents did not express any shame or embarrassment from growing up working-class, but they did express a desire for upward social mobility. They are pursuing better jobs, and do not believe securing a managerial role will alienate them from their families.

Hurst (2010) describes these students as the most naive and as still developing into either a Loyalist or Renegade. None of these students expressed any tense relationships with family members, and described a more harmonious childhood than the Loyalist or Renegades. Hurst makes special note that the Loyalist and Renegade groups included a mix of genders and races, but all Double Agents identified as white women.

Hurst (2010) admits her research relies on only the student perspective and that speaking with the parents of each student would provide more confirmation. For example, the students who identified themselves as Loyalists may believe they are remaining loyal to their working-class roots and purposefully rejecting middle-class values, but their parents may see some changes and would classify their child differently.



I must also acknowledge my research was informed by two other theories, consciously and unconsciously, Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital and Liu's (2011) Social Class Worldview Model. I learned about class through these two additional theories, so I know they influenced my research about class.

### **Forms of Capital**

Bourdieu (1986) writes about class being more than economic capital, or that which is, or can easily convert into, money. Class also includes cultural capital and social capital, both of which can be converted into economic capital but not directly. All three forms of capital inform and influence one's class.

Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) includes cultural understanding and knowledge passed from one human to another, with the most effective transmission being from a parent to a child starting at birth (embodied state); physical items and the knowledge of how to enjoy or use these items such as books and paintings (objectified state); and titles or educational degrees that imply a great level of knowledge or expertise (institutionalized state). Regardless if the cultural capital is invisible or visible, the accumulation has a significant impact on one's class, with accumulation being key. Cultural capital is not simply inherited such as money or a piece of land, but is absorbed over time, with children born into families within upper classes accumulating the most. Upper-class families do not need their children to participate in economic capital building endeavors, such as working a part-time job, thus freeing up more time to accumulate more cultural capital.

Social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is about groups of networks someone is in or has access to. These groups range from the family you are born into to a social group you choose (and are allowed) to join such as a sorority. These social groups take effort to maintain, such as

participating in events together that require economic capital (weddings, retreats, etc.), maintaining an appropriate level of communication (phone calls, in-person visits), and helping to determine who is and is not allowed to join the group (shunning someone who wishes to join the family by marriage, denying entrance into your sorority based on class expectations). These social groups are access points to cultural and economic capital, and the bigger and more networks you can build (or are born into), the more social capital you can gain.

Barratt (2011) expands on Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital theory by naming additional forms of capital, making them more explicit and more clearly labeled than Bourdieu's overarching category of cultural capital. Barratt identifies academic capital, the ability to perform well in a classroom by understanding how to take notes, read well, and participate in class discussions; leadership capital, the ability to work well with other students and staff and provide leadership to a group; spiritual, moral, values, and ethical capital, which serve as the foundation of a person that is considered to be educated; and language capital, which is having a certain accent and vocabulary associated with middle-class or higher education (2011).

I appreciated Yosso's (2005) critique of Bourdieu's theory. No theory or research is written objectively, and while Forms of Capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is presented as a neutral theory, Bourdieu was not just writing about the different forms of capital, but really about what capital is valuable (Yosso, 2005). The types of capital Bourdieu chose to define was a subjective decision, informed by privilege. A critical analysis of what is not included in this theory may provide more insight than what is included in the theory.

### **Social Class Worldview Model**

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM-R) elaborates on the original model (Liu, 2001) by providing more depth into different levels of class consciousness. This model was built

as a way to move social class understanding from a macro, or sociological level, to an individual level, to account for an individual's level of consciousness and agency. The theory comprises three parts: Economic culture, the worldview, and classism.

The economic culture (Liu, 2011) is the large and smaller levels of economic context influencing what a person may find valuable. These range from the U.S. economic capitalist system to an individual's neighborhood. These differences in economic culture will influence if a person finds human capital (such as educational degrees), social capital (networks), or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), more important and valuable definitions of their class status.

The worldview consists of socialization messages and class consciousness (Liu, 2011). Socialization messages come from friends, peers, and family members, and may also include messages from groups someone wishes to join. These messages influence how one approaches materialism, lifestyle considerations, and social class behaviors. Liu breaks down class consciousness into three categories - No Social Class Consciousness, Social Class Self-Consciousness, and Social Class Consciousness - with each category having three or four subcategories. For example, someone may be "unaware" of class where there is recognition of rich and poor, but no understanding of how social systems work to create inequality, or someone could be "questioning" their social class status where their questioning may be creating feelings of tensions and anxieties around how their social class may be operating in their life and society as a whole. Both of these subcategories are listed under No Social Class Consciousness but represent different levels along the class consciousness continuum (Liu, 2011).

The final component of the SCWM-R (Liu, 2011) is classism. Classism can be experienced upwardly or downwardly (negative attitudes and behaviors aimed at those perceived to be a higher or lower class), horizontally (lateral comparison), and internalized as "feelings of

anxiety, depression, anger, and frustration arising from not being able to maintain one's social class standing" (Liu, 2011, p. 86).

My two main frameworks and two influencing theories helped me situate my understanding of how my participants describe their relationships with their families, their middle-class socialization happening on campus (their awareness of and acceptance or resistance to), and how they see this socialization impacting their relationships with their families. These frameworks helped guide my interview questions, my follow up questions, and help put language behind similar experiences.

### **Identities in My Theoretical Frameworks**

These four theoretical frameworks added significant value to, and explicitly and implicitly influenced, my research. It remained important I use a critical lens and consider the author's identities and positionality, the identities of their research participants, and how intersectionality impacted their findings and theory development.

Yosso, currently a professor in the Graduate School at University of California Riverside, previously a professor a Chicano/a studies at the time of her theory publication, is a first-generation college student who uses the frameworks critical race theory and critical media literacy to analyze educational access and opportunity (University of California Riverside, 2018). Yosso's work centers and is informed by Communities of Color. Her theory, Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) is informed by decades of critical race theory work, and researchers working in sociology and legal studies. Yosso's work uses an asset lens and directly challenges class theories based around privilege. I believe this theory and Yosso's work will do the most justice by my research participants.

Hurst, an associate professor and associate director in the Sociology Program in the School of Public Policy at Oregon State University, has research interests in class inequality, higher education and social mobility, school to work transitions of college graduates, social welfare policy, and higher education policy (Oregon State University, 2021). In her book, *The Burden of Academic Success: Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents*, Hurst (2010) acknowledges she is a “White educated woman from the working class” (p. 252). She recognizes her identities impacted how her participants perceived her, and it was not coincidence that she interviewed more white women than any other group (Hurst, 2010). Lastly, she also admits her sample, collected through snowballing and included many students she had taught as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, was not a random sample, and she had no intention of conducting a full gender or race analysis as a part of her study (Hurst, 2010). I recognize Hurst shares a lot of my own identities, and I wonder if I am attracted to this theory because she sounds like me even if I did not know she looked like me until I dug a little deeper.

Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French social scientist, born to a working-class family, and accessed higher education as post-secondary education was expanding in France (Medvetz & Sallaz, 2018). While Bourdieu was critical of unequal access to institutional resources, he was writing about the unequal access late in his research career, well after establishing himself as a significant sociologist and acquiring multiple forms of capital himself, a place of privilege. Bourdieu’s theory uses research collected in 1960’s France, through a survey instrument with 1,217 respondents (Bourdieu, 1984). The survey respondents were asked to indicate their profession, sex, age, highest educational qualification, and father’s social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu acknowledges the sample underrepresents semi-skilled laborers and unskilled labor (1984), and its instrument, and thus analysis, does not include race, sexuality, ability, nor many

other significant social identities. Bourdieu also admits his survey instrument was not appropriate for all professions, specifically farmers, which were removed from the final sample (1984). Bourdieu's privileged status as a researcher with the highest level of formal education attainable, time of his data collection, and minimal social identities included in his analysis were important factors to consider.

Ming Liu, a professor at the University of Maryland and chair of the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education, has research interests in social class and classism, men and masculinity, and white supremacy and privilege (University of Maryland, 2021). In developing the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM), Liu (2001) reviews how socioeconomic status (SES) is understood in sociological literature and psychology literature and finds the similarities and gaps in these two canons of literature. Liu (2001) reviews specific components of SES, including cultural, human, and social capital, but I noted he did not reference Bourdieu in this research. Liu (2001) is critical of previous SES research, including citing that some studies used homogeneous samples, ignored race in the analysis, and did not consider the importance of peer relationships. Liu was motivated to develop the SCWM to combine both the sociological and psychological components that impact one's worldview of their class, and he uses social constructionism as his guiding epistemology, the same epistemology I am using for this study. While Liu does not explicitly address race or other social identities in the model, he does address that both our social identities on a micro and macro level will influence how we understand our class.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature influencing my research, specifically research about middle-class and working-class values, the explicit and implicit ways universities socialize all

students into the middle-class, and how first-generation college students experience negative impacts on their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) once they start attending college. This chapter also reviewed my three theoretical frameworks, specifically my two main frameworks from Yosso (2005), Community Cultural Wealth, and Hurst (2010), Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents, and my two influencing frameworks, Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital (including additional forms added by Barratt (2011)), and Liu's (2011) Social Class Worldview Model. These frameworks provided a guide for my interview questions, described in my next chapter, and helped me put defined and shared language behind participants' experience.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Chapter III covers my epistemology, methodology, research methods, participants, data analysis, my process for ensuring reliability, COVID-19 impacts, ethical considerations, and my researcher stance. Each piece includes a discussion of why I chose it and why it aligns with its preceding component. The purpose of this study was to explore how, if at all, a relationship between a first-generation, working-class student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is influenced by the student attending college, with a specific emphasis on exploring if class socialization is one of the factors impacting this relationship. Literature tells us college students at 4-year institutions are encouraged to take on middle-class values, which are often in contrast with working-class values.

My primary research question was:

- Q1 How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

My sub-research questions were:

- Q2 What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship?
- Q3 What role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship?

#### **Epistemology**

I chose Constructionism for this research for three reasons. My research is centered on understanding my participants' experience on a college campus and how it is impacting their



relationship with their parent(s)/guardian(s), an objective happening (attending college) and their subjective meaning-making of it. Secondly, as a researcher, I find myself most often viewing research through this lens. There are multiple ways of knowing knowledge, and I find myself most often asking questions about how folks make meaning (subjective) about their experiences (objective). Others' construction of knowledge is important to me, and it is something I inquire about frequently both in my personal and professional relationships. Lastly, a Constructionist epistemology allows me to give a significant amount of written voice to the participants' stories, something I find comfort in reading myself. Hearing about other experiences among first-generation, working-class students brings me relief; hearing stories like mine, even if I never meet them, helps me feel like I am not alone in my experiences.

Constructionism research believes meaning is not found, but is constructed (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism, a clear turn away from the objectivism found in positivist research, is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty, 1998, p. 32)

Constructionism researchers argue this epistemology is not all subjectivism, meaning is not created from nothing, but rather there is a level of objectivism, there is something that is an object we humans then construct meaning from (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism speaks of intentionality, referring to relatedness, which suggests an unbreakable relationship between the conscious subject (the research participant) and the object of the research participant's consciousness (college-going experience) (Crotty, 1998). This intentionality rejects both pure objectivism and pure subjectivism simultaneously by

acknowledging there is an object we become conscious of, and we construct meaning of the object based on our lived experiences (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism research also talks about the idea of a bricoleurs, which are individuals focused on making something out of what is in front of them (Crotty, 1998). While Crotty (1998) speaks of this as a handy person looking at different pieces of wood to see what they can construct, and to be creative with the construction, this can also be applied to construction with data, putting pieces together and making meaning from the data presented. This requires the researcher to not only see the conventional meanings that have been ascribed to their data, but to be open to a new rich meaning (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism also recognizes as we make meaning with our world, with the objects we experience, our meaning making construction is not ours alone, but is influenced by our culture (Crotty, 1998). Culture is something we inhabit, and it is something that inhabits us, and guides our meaning making (Crotty, 1998). Culture teaches us how to view objects, and also teaches us whether we should or should not see an object as meaningful, or at all (Crotty, 1998).

### **Methodology**

To align with a constructionist epistemology, I used a phenomenological methodology. Both find the presence of an experience or object to be true (objectivism) but find subjectivism true as the research participant experiences or makes meaning of the experience or object.

Phenomenology is generally defined as the science of phenomena (van Manen, 2015), and is the study of essence or what is, known as the *qualis* (Errasti-Ibarrando et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2013). Phenomenology cares about the immediate experiences, before we assign meaning or start to interpret them (Creswell, 2003). Husserl (1970) describes phenomenology as studying

the lifeworld, objects or experiences within the world, in natural attitude, the unreflective mode of being that is natural and effortless.

Born out of the Greek word *phenomenon*, which refers to the appearance of things or phenomena (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003), the word *phenomenology* started to appear in texts in the 18th century (Moran, 2000). In 1900, Husserl brought phenomenology out of philosophy and analyzing pseudo-problems and into analyzing concrete lived experiences (Moran, 2000). Phenomenology today is most commonly understood as a combination of Husserl's and Heidegger's (hermeneutic) work (Moran, 2000). Because phenomenology has history in, and can be used as, a philosophy, paradigm, and research methodology, it has a complicated past that is jumbled and difficult to discern, that I would argue is inaccessible to most, but I am more focused on doing phenomenology, writing about an experience that may be considered mundane, and that allows me to call into question what I may take for granted (Creswell, 2003; Moran, 2000; van Manen, 2007).

Phenomenology demands for the researcher to engage in bracketing, or setting aside their own pre-understandings of a phenomena (Jones et al., 2013). van Manen (1990) explains, "The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much" (p. 46). Knowing too much about this phenomenon is something I certainly find true for myself, and I found bracketing or completely ignoring my pre-understanding unrealistic. Thankfully, Dahlberg (2006) introduced bridling, a modern and more realistic version of bracketing that pulls its name from horseback riding.

Described by Dahlberg et al. (2008), there are three components of bridling: 1. Similar to how a rider may restrain the horse's reins, bridling includes the "restraining of one's pre-

understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of meaning and thus limit the research options” (pp. 129-130).

2. Similar to being alert and fully focusing on a horse’s movement, it is an “open and alert attitude of activity waiting for the phenomenon to show up and display itself within the relationship” (p. 130). 3. It allows the phenomenon to present itself by looking forward, not backward (Ellet, 2011). The researcher charging herself with the responsibility of bridling, forces herself to become aware of what she sees as truth, to analyze what experiences she takes for granted, and to become reflexive when asking questions (Bevan, 2014). By committing to the process of bridling throughout the entire data collection and analysis process, the research remains faithful to the phenomenon description provided by the research participants (Bevan, 2014). This commitment, informally known as the phenomenological attitude, is formally known as the *epoché*, or taking nothing for granted about a specific phenomenon based on one’s own experience (Bevan, 2014).

Conducting phenomenological research and practicing bridling and using theoretical frameworks to guide my research could be seen as being in opposition to one another. My research questions (listed below) were guided by my theoretical frameworks, but my analysis focused on how my research participants experienced this particular phenomenon, not on looking for data pieces that align or diverge from previous research. If my research participants were to describe similar experiences with the phenomenon, my theoretical frameworks provided previously defined language that aligned with my research participant’s group language, but I was not limited by my theories.

For this research, I studied how higher education impacts relationships between working-class, first-generation college students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) by exploring the

phenomenon of the daily/weekly interactions between these two groups. It is natural to take these interactions, such as a phone call with one's mom, or dinner with parents, or a quick morning conversation with a grandparent before heading to school, for granted because they likely happen frequently. But these daily/weekly interactions make up a significant portion of these relationships, and higher education may be impacting the relationships.

### **Methods**

I conducted interviews as my main data collection method. These data were triangulated with feedback from my researcher diary and a panel of experts.

### **Interviews**

With the understanding that truth and validity is given to an experience or phenomenon through language, specifically using the same consistent language to identify the phenomenon, an interview data collection method aligned well with this methodology (von Eckartsberg, 1986). "There is power in stories, for both the storyteller and the reader. A story is able to get to depths lost in a theory or model, it creates connection, it is vulnerable, it is wise (Ardoin & Martinez, 2019, p. 5). Conducting a phenomenological interview requires intentionality. Some advice given by other researchers was to be general and broad, but I connected with one theme of structured interviewing I used for my research.

There exists general guidance in undertaking phenomenological interviews. Moustakas (1994) explains the researcher must engage in the process of bracketing for an interview to be phenomenological, although I chose to practice the updated version of bracketing known as bridling (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Giorgi (1997) advises questions should be general and broad allowing the research participant freedom to answer the question as they best see fit. Benner (1994) suggests the questions being asked use vocabulary the research participant is familiar

with and understands to avoid asking theory laden questions and thus abandoning the practice of bracketing.

My research into phenomenological interviewing did find one structural trend. Giorgi (1989, 1997) writes about the interview process being two-tiered, where you first obtain contextual information and then, secondly, elicit meaning about the phenomenon. Benner (1994) describes the need for more than one interview per research participant and emphasized the importance of the researcher using clarifying questions for full descriptions and to not take anything for granted about the phenomenon. Seidman (2006) writes phenomenological interviewing requires three interviews per participant, with the interviews focusing on context or life history, reconstructing the experience, and making meaning of the experience, respectfully.

Following this structural trend, I used the structure proposed by Bevan (2014) that involves breaking the interview down into three parts: Contextualization, Apprehending the Phenomenon, and Clarifying the Phenomenon (p. 139). Bevan (2014) does not specify that each part requires its own interview but does clearly state they must happen in this specific order. Contextualization requires asking questions to understand the participant's life history and context of this phenomenon. An example question from my specific research is, "tell me about who lives at home with you."



Once a researcher understands the participant's context, which influences how they experience the phenomenon, they can move into Apprehending the Phenomenon. This second interview phase involves asking questions specifically related to the phenomenon. Bevan (2014) specifically suggests asking questions that are descriptive and structural. For example, I asked research participants to describe how they most often communicate with their parents/guardians (descriptive) and asked them to provide detail about the conversation topics they discussed

(structural). Lastly, in order to help provide clarity of the phenomenon, Bevan (2014) says the researcher should ask structural questions that charge the participant with thinking how their experience may be different if a structural component were to change. For example, if a student lived with only their mother and is describing a phone call with her, I asked them to describe how the phone call would be different if they were talking to their other parent. Bevan (2014) refers to this as imaginative variation, and it may help elicit more details about the phenomenon as the participant has to reflect on what is structurally unique about their experience in comparison to another, possibly hypothetical, experience.

### Figure 1

*Example Interview Questions in Structured Order.*

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<i>Contextualization</i>	Tell me about the type of work your parent(s)/guardian(s) do.
	
<i>Apprehending the Phenomenon</i>	Tell me about your daily/weekly routine. How are your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved?
	
<i>Clarifying the Phenomenon</i>	How do you think your interactions with your parents today would look different if they had attended college?

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The questions I asked for my interviews were semi-structured, allowing me to respond to a participant's unique response and remain focused on exploring this specific phenomenon (Wilson, 2016). All questions were applicable to my research, guided by my framework, written using a phenomenological methodology, and using Bevan's (2014) structure as detailed in Appendix B.

Each participant completed one interview with me. The interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were all held via Zoom. Zoom calls were recorded, and the student could choose if they wish to have their camera on or off. The recordings will be destroyed once the research project is complete because they are identifiable data.

To account for the high likelihood of research participant attrition, and because I was planning to do only one interview with each participant, I was aiming for a large number of participants, looking for initial commitments from at least 40 students. Participant attrition can be expected during any study, and I anticipated experiencing higher than average levels due to the impacts of COVID-19 and remote/online learning. As discussed in further detail below, COVID and our online/remote environment did impact my ability to recruit participants, with 13 expressing interest and nine completing the interview.

### **Researcher Diary**

Researcher diaries are unique to each researcher and can serve a variety of purposes. Gerstl-Pepin and Patrizio (2009) argue that as researchers document their personal thoughts, feelings, and decisions in their diary, the diary writer can see how their knowledge is realized and created, thus leading to “epistemological awareness” (p. 300). Engin (2011) writes, “the study of knowledge construction is scaffolded by the journal” (pp. 297-298). I use my diary to record decisions and progress I make every day, reactions to the data collection and analysis process, analysis exercises unrelated to my data to continuously practice data analysis, periodic reflections on my progress, tasks to be done in the future, and insights gained from my panel of experts.



### **Panel of Experts**

I requested support from four professionals who worked directly or indirectly with my population of study at my research site to gain insight from experts who are intimately familiar with my specific sample. My panel consisted of four colleagues from Mountain West University: Fabiola Mora, director of the Academic Advancement Center; Dr. Gaye Degregorio, executive director of the Collaborative of Student Achievement; Dr. Shannon Archibeque-Engle, assistant vice president for Diversity; and Dr. Ryan Barone, assistant vice president for Student Success.

I convened the panel once every three weeks for 45 minutes to process through my progress, check if my preliminary data analysis themes were aligning with their understanding of working-class, first-generation college students' experience, what deficit language they commonly saw in literature involving first-generation college students, what asset-based practices they were engaging in, and I always welcomed any feedback they wanted to offer. Individual research participant information was not shared to protect the participant's data and valuable story. The panel did not serve as a second doctoral dissertation committee that offers feedback on my dissertation in its entirety but gave me the opportunity to learn from local experts outside of my dissertation committee. I recorded insights gained from this group in my researcher diary, clearly identifying this specific set of data with color coding and labeling.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

The study took place at large, public, land-grant university in the Mountain West region. The university will be identified as Mountain West University, MWU. I address ethical consideration of recruiting participants from the same institution where I serve as an administrator in the Ethical Consideration section below. My study included a total of nine participants. Recruitment and data collection took place in spring 2021.

## **Research Setting and Recruitment**

Land Grant institutions were built to give opportunities to children of farmers and working-class families an opportunity to earn a college degree, and being a Land Grant institution means it values access, inclusion, and opportunity. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the institution had over 34,000 students, with 68% of those students being in-state residents, 24% identifying as students of color, and one in every four students being a first-generation college student.

After receiving the appropriate IRB approval, I worked with a variety of departments to recruit participants including, the Academic Advancement Center, the Black/African American Cultural Center, the Native American Cultural Center, the Asian Pacific American Cultural Center, El Centro, the Community for Excellence, Student Success, and the Key Communities (living-learning communities that prioritize students from low-income, first-generation backgrounds). I also worked with staff from the Career Center, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Adult Learner and Veteran Services, Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement, Campus Activities, and Athletics. I sent colleagues in those departments a recruitment email and asked them to share it with their populations or students they know that may fit my research criteria. I also posted on my personal Facebook account and two “class of” Facebook pages. The email and social media posts included a link to an interest survey and informed consent information. I did not make any direct asks of students to participate. I only learned of their interest in participating once they completed my interest survey.

My research criteria was defined as:

- First-generation college students attending the institution. I defined first-generation college students as students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) do not possess a bachelor's degree.
- Students had to be in their 3rd year of college or beyond and have completed at least two years of their education on the institution's campus or another 4-year university. I believed working with upper-class students would provide more rich experiences as they have had at least two years in college to reflect on for this research. This population would also help fill the gap in literature since most previous research has focused on students getting ready to leave for college or students who are in their first semester of college. It was important to the phenomenon to study students who have experienced significant time of socialization on a 4-year campus, as compared to a 2-year campus, as the goals, missions, and populations served are different.
- Students had to come from a working-class family. The phenomenon being studied was students being socialized into a different class than their parent(s)/guardian(s), and how that impacted their relationships. It is possible for students to be first-generation but to have also been raised in a middle-class family.

I used a purposeful sampling method that helped me connect with participants who had rich stories to share and I asked the participants to help me with a snowball sampling method (Palinkas et al., 2015). My purposeful sampling method involved emailing colleagues who directly or indirectly supported first-generation college students. I asked them to share my recruitment email with any students they believed may be interested in participating.

I had to acknowledge my participants are currently moving through their studies during a worldwide pandemic. I also had to acknowledge many of these students, and their families, were financially impacted by COVID-19. This needed sensitivity was included in my email recruitment. Additionally, for the students who did participate in my research, I shared my extreme appreciation for their participation. I would have appreciated any participation regardless of the circumstances, but the circumstances of participating in a Zoom research interview during a time when most students were exhausted with so many Zoom calls happening for school and work were unique and deserved acknowledgement.

A phenomenological study demands research decisions remain centered on the phenomenon and must be important to studying the phenomenon of interest. My literature review revealed studies that included students from a large variety of class backgrounds, including poor or low-income students. It was important my research participants only identified as working-class backgrounds because of the unique working-class values identified in the literature. Providing working-class identifiers for the participants to consider, and asking each participant why they identified as working-class, helped me ensure I was only interviewing working-class students. Working-class families feel pride in their class position and often want to remain as working-class. This unique desire to fight against social class mobility is important to studying this phenomenon.

### **Participants**

In total, 13 students expressed interest in the study, and nine completed the interview. I spent between 45 and 120 minutes on Zoom with each participant. I asked each participant a similar number of questions, but some participants shared very long stories for each question while others were more direct in their answers, causing the wide range in length of interviews. I

offered each participant the opportunity to be identified by a pseudonym. I made the initial offer at the beginning of the interview and followed up to confirm their choice at the end of the interview in case they wanted to change their selection. One participant chose a pseudonym while the rest were comfortable being identified by their real name.

Of my nine participants, seven (78%) identified as women or female and two (22%) identified as men or male. Eight (89%) identified as students of color, specifically with six identifying as Latinx or Hispanic, one identifying as Indonesian, and one identifying as Native American and Spaniard, and one (11%) participant identified as white. Three (33%) participants shared their parents immigrated to the U.S. before they were born, and one (11%) shared they are undocumented. Four (44%) identified religion or spirituality playing a significant role in their life. All (100%) participants were in-state residents. All (100%) participants identified as having a biological mom or dad as one of their guardians, while almost all mentioned other folks also serving in a guardian role (biological aunts and uncles, community aunts and uncles, grandparents, stepparents, older siblings). Individual participant data is listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Participant Data.*

Participant	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Documentation	Religion/ Spirituality	Parents Immigrated
Alejandro	Man	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	No
Dominique	Woman	Chicana	Documented	Not significant	No
Albert	Male	Latino/Hispanic	Documented	Not significant	Yes
Maria	Female	Indonesian	Undocumented	Significant	Yes
Sophia	Woman	Latinx	Documented	Not significant	No
Natalie	Woman	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	Yes
Kelly	Woman	Latina	Documented	Significant	No
Angel	Woman	Native American and Spaniard	Documented	Not significant	No
Constance	Woman	White	Documented	Not significant	No

Alejandro, a senior studying nutrition, identified as a Hispanic male. He also shared he was raised as Jehovah Witness but chose to leave the religion near the end of high school. His family (mom, dad, younger sister, and a recently added infant sibling) live close by in a small town about 20 minutes east of the university. He did not have a job at the time of interview but has worked an average of 20 hours per week for most of his time at MWU. His dad is a stucco worker, and is the “provider” for the family, and his mom manages the home. He described his family as working-class because they “had to work to live”. Alejandro described his family finances as not having any room for emergencies; there was hardly every any extra money, but if there was, it would be spent on something the family wanted. Alejandro’s tuition and fees are being covered through scholarships. He lived in a residence hall his first year and has since lived in off-campus residences with roommates.

Dominique, a senior studying social work, identified as a Chicana. She also described her role in her family as being important, specifically being a sister, daughter, and granddaughter. She was finishing her coursework for her undergraduate degree during the semester she participated in the interview and had recently been accepted into graduate school to earn her MSW. She is from the local metro area. Her guardianship and who she lived with growing up was inconsistent. At times she lived with her mom, her biological dad, her stepdad, or her grandparents, and she considers her mom, stepdad and grandparents to be her guardians, her “safety net.” She also has four siblings, one older brother, one younger brother, and two younger sisters. Her mom has worked a variety of hospitality jobs including waitressing and “stripping” and has most recently moved into nutrition coaching and instructing Zumba classes; her stepdad is a rec instructor; grandma is a paraprofessional in K-12 classrooms; and grandpa is a taxi driver. She lived on campus her first year, has lived one semester abroad while participating in

Semester at Sea, and has spent the rest of her time in off-campus residences with roommates.

Dominique did not work during her first semester at MWU, but has held a job ever since, and was working a nearly full-time internship during the time of the interview. When asked why she identifies as working-class, she described her mom as being an unstable parent, living in Section 8 housing, and using food stamps for groceries. Dominique was awarded a full-ride scholarship at MWU meant specifically for first-generation college students who achieved high grades in high school.

Albert, a junior studying civil engineering, is from a small mountain town. He identifies as Latino and Hispanic. He also feels strongly connected to his studies and identifies as an engineer. He grew up in a mobile home where his mom, dad, brother, (and later his older sister) and he would share one bedroom and rent the other rooms to family or other tenants. He lived on campus his first year and has lived in off-campus apartments with roommates since. During the time of the interview, he worked several part-time jobs, but has the ability to choose how many hours he wants to work at each since he has financial support through scholarships and his parents. Both of Albert's parents immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador after Albert's dad fought in the civil war. After coming to the U.S., Albert's dad worked for many years in restaurants, and now works for his local parks department as a landscaper and superintendent. His mom is a housekeeper for the large homes in his hometown. Albert described his dad's work as "backbreaking" and stated "he [dad] puts his back into everything." When asked about his working-class identity, he spoke about the "mindset of 'I need to work'" even though his expenses were covered by scholarships.

Maria, a third-year studying biochemistry and minoring in ethnic studies, is from the the local metro area. Maria is a DACA student. She immigrated from Indonesia with her mom when

she was five years old. She identifies as Christian, female, 21 years old, and also as living in a pandemic. Before moving to the local university town for school, she lived with her mom and three younger brothers, ages 17, 8, and 6. Her mom worked in places like Wal-Mart when she first immigrated to the U.S. and is now a CNA. Maria's mom works a lot to provide for her kids, so there are several community Aunties and Uncles that helped raise Maria and her siblings. Maria also plays a significant role in helping to raise her siblings, such as communicating with all of their teachers. Maria lived on campus her first year and has since lived in off-campus residences with roommates. Maria has her school-related expenses covered by a scholarship for Dreamer students. Maria talked about money being tight growing up, being taught to never waste anything, and waiting to replace items once they were beyond repair. She spends almost all day away from her apartment either going to the gym, working, or doing homework in the library.

Sophia, a senior studying psychology, is from the local metro area. She is planning to do a year with City Year and then attend graduate school. Sophia identifies as Latinx, and looks at her mom, stepdad, and dad as her guardians. She does not talk with her biological dad much, but "he tries his best", and has a limited relationship with her stepdad because he only speaks Spanish and Sophia does not speak Spanish fluently. She describes all of her parents being supportive, and her mom being her biggest supporter in school. She has six sisters (she is the third oldest) and two half-brothers. Her mom is a paraprofessional in K-12 classrooms and is an interpreter; her stepdad is a cook; and her dad is an insurance agent. When asked about her working-class identity, Sophia described being raised with governmental assistance and finances being tight. Sophia chose MWU because it offered her a strong financial aid package. She lived on campus her first year, and has lived in off-campus residences with roommates every year since.



Natalie is a fifth-year student who transferred to MWU after completing two and a half years at a local community college. She was in her last semester for her degree in early childhood professions. Natalie is from a mid-size town about 30 minutes south of the university and is the youngest of 5 siblings. She lived with her mom and some of her siblings growing up and while attending community college, she moved out of state for one semester to support extended family, and now lives in the local university town with her brother who also attends MWU. She identifies as Hispanic and a caregiver and being a first-generation college student is an important identity for her. Her mom immigrated to the U.S. where she initially worked in restaurants and factories. She then started working as a custodian in schools and has since worked herself up to the lead custodian. Natalie described her identities relating to accountability, such as being accountable to work, accountable to family, and accountable to the church. Natalie describes her family as working-class, but also had difficulty with the identity because her family did not have a lot of money but did have more money than many other Hispanic and Latin communities around her. Sophia started working at age 15, tending to horses, then working retail, then working as a receptionist, and now working in a daycare in a job relating to her studies. Natalie has most of her educational costs covered through scholarships.

Kelly, a third-year student majoring in social work and Spanish, came to MWU because her older sister also attends MWU. Kelly is one of seven children, identifies as Latina, spiritual, and also specifically noted she is a U.S. citizen. She is from a small town about two hours south of the university. She lived in the residence halls her first year and has lived in off-campus residences with roommates since. Her mom and dad are separated, and both helped raise her. Her dad is self-employed in the construction industry, and her mom is also self-employed, cleaning houses. When reflecting on her family's social class, she spoke about growing up on food

stamps, visiting the food bank often, and wearing clothes that were mostly hand-me-downs. She also spoke about how the “universe loves us [her family]” and described helpful financial opportunities that were offered to her family, like a property owner giving her mom a significant discount in her rent. Kelly worked 25 hours per week at the time of the interview and had secured a significant amount of scholarships to cover her tuition and fees.

Angel, a third-year student majoring in neuroscience, is from the local metro area where she lived with her mom, dad, younger sister, and an older brother until he moved out. She identifies as Native American and Spaniard. Her ethnicities and first-generation college student identity are very salient for her, especially as a STEM major. Before her mom had to stop working due to a disability, she processed paperwork for folks applying for public assistance benefits, and her dad owns a small landscaping business. Angel lived in the residence halls her first year, an on-campus apartment her second year, a sorority house her third year, and was moving into a house with a few roommates for her senior year. She was awarded a full-ride scholarship that requires her to work a minimum of 10 hours per week. She has worked mostly with on-campus jobs to fulfill that job requirement, and usually works between 10 and 20 hours per week. Angel described her family as working-class because they could afford their bills, but they could not afford extras like vacations.

Constance started at MWU in fall 2013. She took some time off from classes, went to a community college for a few semesters, and was a few months away from finishing her degree in ethnic studies at the time of the interview. She was my only research participant who identified as white. She is an in-state student but moved around a lot due to her dad’s job. She was living in the local university town when she graduated high school, so it made financial sense to attend MWU. She lived on campus for one semester, but then moved back in with her

parents. Her parents have since left the local university town, again for her dad's job, and she is now living with her partner. Constance's mom is a nanny, and her dad works in the tech industry. Her dad earned a tech related associates degree later in his career but learned most of his skills on the job. His industry frequently hired and laid off temporary workers. Constance and her family moved for his temporary roles, but they never stayed in any specific city for very long because of layoffs. Constance put herself through school by working a lot of jobs, loans, and taking breaks when needed. She has an older and younger brother and feels a lot of pressure being the only girl in her family and having many "strong" women in her extended family.

### **Data Analysis**

A phenomenological study allows a researcher to gather a great amount of detail about the participant's experience with a particular phenomenon, thus, the researcher, to honor the data collected, should use an analysis process that produces a thick description of the data (Alase, 2017). Similar to interviewing, coding and analyzing data for any qualitative study, including phenomenological, requires intentionality to ensure thoroughness and reliable results. This process is time-consuming for qualitative research, but a reliable process that acknowledges subjectivism, and safeguards against bias, is necessary.

One safeguard for phenomenological research is a cyclical approach to bracketing (Smith et al., 2009). As the researcher, I continued to practice bridling as I analyzed the data through journaling my own thoughts and experiences in my researcher diary to ensure I remained focused on the participants' experiences and their descriptions of the phenomenon. I journaled about my own experience as a first-generation, working-class student and the impacts my college experience has had on my relationship with my parents. While interviewing students, I wrote down quotes that stood out to me and compared them to notes about my own lived experiences.

The comparison activity allowed me to see if the quote felt impactful to me because it related directly with my own lived experience, or because it was significantly different from my own experience, or because it was a profound demonstration of meaning making or reflection from the student. While it was impossible to not interpret the data through my own lens, and my chosen epistemology recognizes how knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants, the continual practice of bridling safeguarded me from allowing my own experience with this phenomenon to dominate my data analysis process.

To dive into and analyze my data, I took guidance mainly from Creswell (2003), Moustakas (1994), and Alase (2017). After having transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim, I read through each interview for all statements relevant to the phenomenon. Creswell (2003) refers to these statements as “significant statements” and cautions the researcher to “treat each statement as having equal worth, and work to develop a list of non-repetitive non-overlapping statements” (p. 193). Moustakas (1994) provides a two-step test to apply to each statement to determine if it is significant: a) Does it contain information that is necessary for understanding the phenomenon, and b) Is it possible to label the statement?

Once these statements have been identified, the researcher must work to group the statements into themes, also known as a “meaning unit” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193), or clustering the experiences into “thematic labels” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Lastly, Alase (2017) then recommends identifying each theme with extremely few words to capture the core essence of the participants’ experience.

After the data had been reviewed for significant statements, grouped into themes, then identified to capture the essence of the experience, I wrote “what” the research participants experienced, also known as the “textural description,” then I wrote “how” the participants

experienced the phenomenon, or the “structural description,” and then combined these two descriptions into one final description (Creswell, 2003, p. 194). This final step in writing these two different descriptions align with the interview method put forth by Bevan (2014) in asking questions both about what the participants experience and how they experience the phenomenon.

### **Validity and Reliability/Truth**

Qualitative research does not ask for objective truths, and it also does not say all knowledge is subjective, but rather there are safeguards against bias (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). Qualitative research often posits that Truth, knowledge and findings that are true for all humans or stakeholders, does not exist, but that truth, findings that acknowledges subjectivity and that is limited in populations it can be applied toward, is still just as valid. Thus, while qualitative research does not, and should not, have statistical testing and margins of error to use to demonstrate rigor, there are multiple techniques or practices a qualitative researcher can use to demonstrate validity.

Phenomenological research demands the researcher to acknowledge what they take for granted as truth and to participate in bracketing/bridling. In alignment with this practice, I maintained a researcher diary throughout my entire research process. Journaling my thoughts allowed me to bridle my experiences, record my own thoughts separate from my participants’, and demonstrate transparency in my process.

Part of the rigor also includes my positionality statement. I verbally shared with my participants information about my identities and motivation for completing this research, and acknowledged how all of these factors may influence the research.

I also asked all of my research participants to participate in member checking, or asking the participants to check my work for accuracy (Stake, 1995). I emphasized the importance of

member checking, letting my participants know it is not simply a routine step or only a gesture of good faith, but that I truly valued their perspective and feedback. I emailed each of the participants their written transcript and provided them the opportunity to clarify or add any additional information. Four of my participants responded to the transcription email, all of which shared the transcript looked accurate and complete. I also emailed all participants brief descriptions of the major shared stories (themes) I found in the data. Two participants responded with feedback on each shared story. The feedback was a mix of seeing their story perfectly reflected in my description, seeing part of their story reflected and adding to the narrative, or not seeing their experience captured in the shared story. I knew some of my shared stories were only reflective of most participants, and not by all, but the feedback about how the participant's individual story differed was insightful and I am grateful for the feedback.

Lastly, I triangulated the data. I had multiple points of data to compare for accuracy and alignment. I looked to see how themes lined up between the students' interviews, feedback from my committee of first-generation college student research experts, and my researcher diary. Multiple points of data allowed me to see if there existed a large gap in my understanding of how the students experienced this phenomenon.

### **Limitations**

There exists multiple limitations that must be considered when reading this research including, but not limited to, the timing of the data collection, my social identities and those of my participants, and single point of data collection that occurred with the research participants.

The participant interviews took place in Spring 2021, in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, during a time when most students were learning and working remotely for most of their classes and education activities. The online learning world was taxing, and I was asking

participants to commit to an additional, voluntary online experience. I believe COVID is one of the two biggest factors that impacted my participant pool. Conducting research while living through a pandemic provides timely feedback, but also made it difficult to collect the data.

Furthermore, because I was collecting data during a pandemic, I had to be realistic about how much I could ask of each research participant. I had hopes of each participant completing an interview and then also completing a follow up written reflection. After guidance from my committee, I decided to not pursue the second piece of data from participants. I was able to triangulate my participant data with data collected from my panel of experts and my research journal, but having a one-time interview or connection with each participant has likely impacted this study.

I identify as a white person, and all but one of my participants identified as people of color. I imagine this impacted both participant recruitment and data collection. It is very possible students did not want to participate because of my race, and students who did participate may have chosen to not share certain stories because I am white. We all shared the identities of being first-generation college students and being raised in a working-class family, but I experienced those identities very differently than most of my participants, and my privileged identities likely impacted this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There are (at least) two ethical concerns I needed to consider relating to my research. The first, and biggest concern, is I was recruiting students from my institution of employment. To lessen the chance of students feeling pressure to participate in my study, or that their participation in my study could influence their experience or standing at Mountain West University, I did not allow any students I supervise or advise to participate, nor did I ask them to

help me recruit participants. Additionally, when sending out recruitment emails, I included my employment title to be transparent, but listed my status as a graduate student at the University of Northern Colorado first to demonstrate which role was taking priority. Similarly, during interviews, I verbally shared my role on campus, but explained my salient identity in that moment was my student identity. I also explicitly stated the student's decision to decline, participate, or leave the study before completion would not impact their academic status at MWU nor in accessing any programs or services.

Secondly, I was prepped to provide on-campus mental health resources available for students to further process our interview content in case any of it was particularly triggering for a participant. While I anticipated some of our discussions may have become emotional, I found it unlikely to be triggering enough for a student to seek mental health resources. Regardless, I was ready to provide information about the counseling center and group processing options. I ended up not needing to provide any resources because almost all of my participants were already connected to the MWU Health Network or another mental health support service on campus. Additionally, none of my research participants showed any signs of being upset or triggered during the interviews.

### **Researcher Stance**

While this research topic is important for higher education professionals, particularly those who wish to engage with parent(s)/guardian(s) and those supporting working-class, first-generation college students, it also helps fill a gap in the research, and is timely considering the increasing numbers of first-generation college students. This research is also driven by personal motivation. As a first-generation college student from a working-class family, my college experience forever altered my relationship with my parents. I did not anticipate the negative



effects it would have on our relationship both while I was in college and on our relationship since.

Both of my parents graduated high school, and then moved into blue collar jobs. My dad, a truck driver/heavy equipment operator/general construction worker, and my mom, a waitress/fast food cashier, both work laborious jobs that are hard on their feet, back, and overall physical health. Just as their parents taught them, they taught me that being physically tired is the sign of a hard day's work. Going to college, working an on-campus job, and then job searching for white collar jobs all had a significant impact on my relationship with my parents.

Once I stopped working physically laborious jobs (I served/waitressed at a restaurant and worked at a pizza place for many years), my parents and I were not able to relate about work as much. In my working-class family, talking about, and relating to each other through labor was important. Putting more time towards non-physically laborious tasks (reading, writing, tutoring, working in an office) put distance between us. My parents felt I was judging them for their type of work, and I felt I was being judged for my type of work.

Additionally, college allowed me to experience upward social mobility. Once I graduated, I was job searching for jobs my parents did not know existed, that I did not know existed until I went to college. I was applying for jobs that paid a salary, not an hourly wage, and included benefits. To this day, talking about income is difficult because there is such a large difference between our paychecks, and it causes us to avoid talking about other topics (cars, houses, going out to dinner, birthday celebrations, almost anything involving money).

I desperately wished I had known what a negative influence my college experience was going to have on my parents, our relationship, and how I could have better navigated that experience. I straddle two classes, purposefully avoiding certain items or actions so as not to lose

my working-class values (never buying organic vegetables, avoiding all Apple products, not listening to NPR or other liberal radio stations), but trying to let go of the guilt when I do buy some items (a new smartphone, a fitness monitor, a nice dinner out).

I cannot disconnect my experiences and identities from this research, nor should I try to do so. It is my personal experiences and identities driving me to listen to this population, to give voice to this population, to hear the nuances in their answers, to know when to tread lightly or not tread at all, to build relationships and trust with this population, and to produce the results in a way that is meaningful and accessible.

While I share some identities with my research participants (being a first-generation college student and being raised working-class), I may also have significantly different life experiences due to my other identities, and I specifically highlight my privileged identities that impact this work. I am white, cis-gender, heterosexual, married, mostly able-bodied, neurotypical, have already earned one graduate degree and am close to finishing a terminal degree. All of these identities give me privilege, impact how my research participants perceive and respond to me, and how I interpret the data. I need to remember that while a participant may be sharing a story that I resonate with, they may have experienced that story for very different reasons than I did, and their unique intersection of identities is vital to center, not just their identity as a first-generation, working-class college student.

Those reading this research should know I expected most of the research participants to talk about their experience being hard, about fear, about hurt, about anger, about feeling left out, about feeling out of control, about feeling they are balancing the desire to be academically successful and also stay close to their family (physically, financially, psychologically). These assumptions, my own experiences, and my theoretical perspectives, guided my questions.

### **Chapter Summary**

This third chapter reviewed my chosen epistemology and methodology, Constructionism and Phenomenology, my choice of individual interviews as my research method, my participant qualification and recruitment experience, and my data analysis structure. Further, this chapter included how I ensured my research is truthful and reliable, limitations of the research, ethical considerations, and my research stance. I defended why I chose each research procedure and how they all align with each other.

## CHAPTER IV

### CLASS SOCIALIZATION ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS: SPACE AS A MIDDLE CLASS VALUE

#### **Abstract**

First-generation, working-class college students may experience a conflict of values when they start higher education (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Gos, 1995). Using a constructionism epistemology, phenomenological methodology, and data collection methods of interviews, researcher diary, and panel of experts, the author found space to be a class-influenced value. The author used Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (2005) model and Hurst's Renegade, Loyalist, and Double Agent study (2010) to analyze the middle-class college socialization experiences of nine first-generation, working-class students. Space showed up as geographical space between themselves and family, privacy, such as having a private bedroom, and consistently sharing space with family, and doing chores together.

#### **Introduction**

Sasha and Marie, fictional students, are both first-year students moving into the residence halls. They have been assigned to live together as roommates. Sasha is an out-of-state student who is nervous about making friends and doing well in her classes but is excited for the opportunity to learn how to be more independent and do things on her own. Marie's family lives about an hour away from the college. Marie feels guilty about moving away from her family. She and her family want Marie to be academically successful in college, and she wants to stay as connected as possible to support her parents and siblings. Sasha's parents make plans to see her

during fall break. Marie plans to drive home every weekend to help her family with chores and spend time with them. Sasha is nervous about sharing a residence hall room with Marie and adjusting to the community style bathroom because she values her privacy and setting her own schedule. Marie is appreciative of having a roommate and sharing space with others. She values and finds comfort being in close physical proximity with her community. Sasha assumed she and Marie would build a friendship overtime, but they would just see each other if they both happen to be in their residence hall room at the same time. Marie assumed they would make plans to study together, eat together, or do other chores together. While fictional, Sasha and Marie demonstrate different expectations students can have based on their values and lived experiences which are heavily influenced by social class.

What expectations do we each have regarding space, and can those expectations be influenced and changed? How does our social class influence how we define and value space? Is space only understood in the physical, such as giving each other six feet of space during these COVID-19 times? What about emotional space between people, the virtual space some of us have been living and working in, or space to be alone? Were you taught to value and expect space, such as your own private bedroom? Or were you taught to always be near family, to share space with those you love? Were you expected to remain close to home for work and school, and how was 'close' defined? Your lived experiences and identities, including gender, race, and social class, influence your experience with space.

First-generation, working-class college students may experience a conflict of values when they start college (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Gos, 1995). First-generation, working-class college students often say they are attending college not just for themselves, but for their entire family (Wartman, 2009). Higher education is seen as the vehicle to upward social mobility, to do better,

but it also comes with the expectations one leaves their class of origin behind to better fit in with the middle-class (Ardoin & Martinez, 2019; Borrego, 2008; Reay, 2005). If higher education as an institution actively engages in the process of socializing these students into the middle class, there is a risk of students developing poor relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) and leaving school because their motivation for attending college (family) is being harmed in the process. Even if a first-generation, working-class student does persist and graduate from college, colleges must consider their ethical responsibility to prepare students for a potential impact on their relationship with their parent(s)/guardian(s) as a result of their educational process.

The data for this article comes from my dissertation research, which explored how, if at all, a relationship between a first-generation, working-class student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is influenced by the student attending college, with a specific emphasis on exploring if class socialization is one of the factors impacting this relationship.

My primary research question was:

- Q1 How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

My sub-research questions were:

- Q2 What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship?
- Q3 What role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship?

My study revealed space is a class-influenced value. My research participants identified space in a variety of ways, shared what space looked like for them growing up, and described how they currently value space. My participants also gave insight into how their changes in valuing space may impact their relationship with their family members.

## Literature Review

Our social class impacts and influences every decision we make (Beagan, 2005; Lubrano, 2004). Social-class values do not exist on a continuum, but there exist some clear distinctions between middle-class and working-class values (Bernstein, 1971; Duvall, 1946; Foley, 1990; Jones et al., 2018; Kohn, 1964). Universities socialize their students into accepting middle-class values and practices (Ris, 2016; Wolff, 1969) through individualism (Hurst, 2010; Lehmann, 2012;), acceptable language (Bernstein, 1971; Peckham, 1995), authoritarianism (Bernstein, 1971; Gos, 1995), organizational structures (Barratt, 2011), and independence from family (Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Valdez, 1996).

Going away from college, putting space in between the family unit, can be stressful for first-generation, students of color (Moreno, 2021). Moreno's participants considered if they should remain enrolled in college when their parents needed their help at home, and also when they visited home, they planned to spend all of their time with their family members and not do any schoolwork (2021). First-generation students may also choose their college based on the proximity to their home so they can remain close to family (Holland, 2020). Additionally, the physical spaces and places on college campuses impact students, particularly students with marginalized identities (Banning, 2016; Thomas & Banning, 2017).

First-generation college students play significant roles in their families, including providing specific support for their parent(s). Covarrubias et al. (2019) found first-generation Latinx and Asian American students provide tangible support to their parents by supporting them emotionally and through advocacy, providing financial support, physically caring for them, offering life advice, watching over their siblings, and serving as a translator when their parents met with banks, insurance agents, or other service providers. Although university campuses

encourage students to become independent from their families, these students expressed their journeys towards fulfilling their own goals as well as always playing a supportive role in their family of origin.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

My research was guided by two theoretical frameworks, Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (2005) and Hurst's Loyalist, Renegade, and Double Agent (2010). Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) is an intentional critique of previously dominant class theories, including Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital. Yosso's theory includes six forms of capital, "aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant" (p. 77). This theory centers race and specifically identifies Communities of Color as the experts and informants for this theory.

Hurst's (2010) identified three different methods students used to manage the opposition between their working-class roots with the university's middle-class environment and expectations. Students either chose to be a loyalist, when they rejected the middle-class values forced on them by their peers, faculty, and the institution; a renegade, when they chose to assimilate to the new middle-class values or chose to be a double agent where they moved between different social groups with different class values (Hurst, 2010).

### **Positionality Statement**

I was raised in a multigenerational, two-bedroom, two-bathroom, mobile home. I lived with my brother, my mom, my uncle (mom's brother) and grams and grandad (mom's mom and dad). I shared a bed with my grams and grandad until they passed, then shared the living room space as a sleeping area with my brother. We gave my uncle his own private bedroom and bathroom because of his mental health conditions, which meant the rest of the family shared the remainder of the home for sleeping, eating, bathing, storage, and relaxing, etc. My dad



eventually moved in with us once my uncle passed away. Due to a variety of reasons, our mobile home quickly fell into disrepair.

My dad, who works in construction, had friends help him with some work on the mobile home to bring it up to livable standards (fixing electrical outlets, soft spots in the subfloor, the septic tank, etc.). It took them almost six months to complete the work because they worked on it after they were done with their day-jobs. During this time, my family lived in a rented fifth-wheel trailer. I started college in that trailer. I slept in the compartment above the bed of the truck, my brother was on the couch, and my parents were in the main sleeping area.

When the work was done, and we were able to move back into the mobile home, there was enough space to have my own private bedroom. Having a private room felt luxurious to me. I never had nor expected privacy growing up. Privacy still feels like a luxury for me today and it influences how I support and work with others. I am quick to allow colleagues or friends to temporarily live with me while they transition homes; I transitioned my department away from private offices and now have all full-time professional staff rotating office spaces to accommodate our growing staff numbers.

While I shared all my physical space very closely with my family growing up, we did not intentional spend time with one another. There were no set meal times to eat together as a family, we did not work through chores together, or watch specific TV shows or movies together. While we may have been physically together, we were emotionally distant.

My blue collar, working-class family never spoke about college, but I knew my friends were planning to go to college. When I decided to apply to college, I only applied to one school because there was only one institution within commuting distance that I believed would accept me. I played a defined role in my family, one that involved helping to pay for bills and to help

take care of my mom. I knew moving away for college was both financially and logistically impossible, and independence from my family was not an experience I was socialized to seek out. I did end up moving away from my family after college, which has me reflecting on how my college experience socialized me to want more space. I am now making plans for my parents to move in with me so I can take care of them. I have had space away from them for about ten years but will be sharing space again soon.

I cannot disconnect my experiences and identities from this research, nor should I try to do so. It is my personal experiences and identities driving me to listen to other first-generation, working-class students, to give voice to this population, to hear the nuances in their answers, to know when to tread lightly or not tread at all, to build relationships and trust with this population, and to produce the results in a way that is meaningful and accessible.

While I will share some identities with my research participants (being a first-generation college student and being raised working-class), I also have significantly different life experiences due to my other identities, and I specifically highlight my privileged identities that impacted this work. I am white, cis-gender, heterosexual, married, mostly able-bodied, neurotypical, have already earned one graduate degree and am close to finishing a terminal degree. All of these identities give me privilege, impact how my research participants perceived and responded to me, and how I interpreted the data. I need to remember that while a participant may have shared a story I resonated with, they may have experienced that story for very different reasons than I did, and their unique intersection of identities is vital to center, not just their identity as a first-generation, working-class college student.

## Methods

My study used a constructionism epistemology, phenomenological methodology, and three data collection methods: participant interviews, a researcher diary, and a panel of experts. Constructionism researchers argue this epistemology is not all subjectivism, meaning is not created from nothing, but rather there is a level of objectivism, there is something that is an object from which we humans construct meaning (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism speaks of intentionality, referring to relatedness, which suggests an unbreakable relationship between the conscious subject (the research participant) and the object of the research participant's consciousness (college-going experience) (Crotty, 1998).

Phenomenology is generally defined as the science of phenomena (van Manen, 2015), and is the study of essence or what is, known as the *qualis* (Errasti-Ibarrando et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2013). Phenomenology demands for the researcher to engage in bracketing, or setting aside their own pre-understandings of a phenomena (Jones et al., 2013). van Manen (1990) explains, "The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much" (p. 46). I find bracketing or completely ignoring my pre-understanding unrealistic, so I engaged in bridling (Dahlberg, 2006).

Described by Dahlberg et al. (2008), there are three components of bridling: Firstly, bridling includes the "restraining of one's pre-understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of meaning and thus limit the research options" (pp. 129-130). While I know my college-going experience has impacted my relationship with my family, I intentionally set up my research question to include the possibility of the college experience having a positive, negative, or no impact on the participants' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Second, it is an "open and alert

attitude of activity waiting for the phenomenon to show up and display itself within the relationship” (p. 130). During each interview, I asked participants to talk to me about their parent(s)/guardian(s) in a variety of ways, giving different opportunities for the potential phenomenon to show itself. Lastly, it allows the phenomenon to present itself by looking forward, not backward (Ellet, 2011). The relationship each participant has with their parent(s)/guardians(s) is always evolving, and even the past can continue to look different based on new life experiences. A phenomenon is not set singularly in the past.

I conducted semi-structured interviews as my main data collection method. These data were triangulated with feedback from my researcher diary and a panel of experts. Truth and validity are given to an experience or phenomenon through language, specifically using the same consistent language to identify the phenomenon (von Eckartsberg, 1986). My interviews had three distinct parts: Contextualization, Apprehending the Phenomenon, and Clarifying the Phenomenon (Bevan, 2014, p. 139).

Researcher diaries are unique to each researcher and can serve a variety of purposes. As researchers document their personal thoughts, feelings, and decisions in their diary, the diary writer can see how their knowledge is realized and created, thus leading to “epistemological awareness” (Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009, p. 300). Engin (2011) writes, “the study of knowledge construction is scaffolded by the journal” (pp. 297-298). I used my diary to record decisions and progress I made every day, reactions to the data collection and analysis process, analysis exercises unrelated to my data to continuously practice data analysis, periodic reflections on my progress, tasks to be done in the future, and insights gained from my panel of experts.

I requested support from four professionals who worked directly or indirectly with my population of study at my research site to gain insight from experts who are intimately familiar with my specific sample population. I convened the panel of four once every three weeks for 45 minutes to process through my progress, check if my preliminary data analysis themes aligned with their understanding of working-class, first-generation college students' experience, what deficit language they commonly saw in literature involving first-generation college students, and the asset-based practices in which they were engaged.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

The study took place at a large, public, land-grant university in the Mountain West region during the spring 2021 semester. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the institution had over 34,000 students, with 68% of those students being in-state residents, 24% identifying as students of color, and one in every four students being a first-generation college student.

In total, 13 students expressed interest in the study, and 9 completed the interview. I spent between 45 and 120 minutes on Zoom with each participant. I offered each participant the opportunity to be identified by a pseudonym. I made the initial offer at the beginning of the interview and followed up to confirm their choice at the end of the interview in case they wanted to change their selection. One participant chose a pseudonym while the rest were comfortable being identified by their real name.

Of my nine participants, seven (78%) identified as women or female and two (22%) identified as men or male. Eight (89%) identified as students of color, specifically with six identifying as Latinx or Hispanic, one identifying as Indonesian, and one identifying as Native American and Spaniard, and one (11%) participant identified as white. Three (33%) participants shared their parents immigrated to the U.S. before they were born, and one (11%) shared they are

undocumented. Four (44%) identified religion or spirituality playing a significant role in their life. All (100%) participants were raised in the same state as the research site. All (100%) participants identified as having a biological mom or dad as one of their guardians, while almost all mentioned other folks also serving in a guardian role (biological aunts and uncles, community aunts and uncles, grandparents, stepparents, older siblings).

**Table 1**

*Participant Data.*

Participant	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Documentation	Religion/ Spirituality	Parents Immigrated
Alejandro	Man	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	No
Dominique	Woman	Chicana	Documented	Not significant	No
Albert	Male	Latino/Hispanic	Documented	Not significant	Yes
Maria	Female	Indonesian	Undocumented	Significant	Yes
Sophia	Woman	Latinx	Documented	Not significant	No
Natalie	Woman	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	Yes
Kelly	Woman	Latina	Documented	Significant	No
Angel	Woman	Native American and Spaniard	Documented	Not significant	No
Constance	Woman	White	Documented	Not significant	No

### Data Analysis

After having transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim, I read through each interview for all statements relevant to the phenomenon. Creswell (2003) refers to these statements as “significant statements” noting that the researcher should “treat each statement as having equal worth, and work to develop a list of non-repetitive non-overlapping statements” (p. 193). Moustakas (1994) provides a two-step test to apply to each statement to determine if it is significant: a) Does it contain information that is necessary for understanding the phenomenon, and b) Is it possible to label the statement? These statements were then grouped into “meaning units” (Creswell, 2003, 193).

### **Validity and Reliability/Truth**

Part of the rigor includes my positionality statement. I verbally shared with my participants information about my identities, my motivation for completing this research, and acknowledged how all of these factors may influence the research. I also asked all of my research participants to participate in member checking (Stake, 1995). Lastly, I triangulated the data.

### **Shared Stories**

This study revealed the participants had shared experiences around space. Most participants shared either a personal desire and/or an expectation from family members to stay close to home, or to limit geographical space between them and family, while attending college. Many participants described sharing bedrooms and all physical space with their family members while growing up. Other participants shared that while they had some physical private space while growing up, such as a private bedroom, they spent most of their time with their parent(s)/guardian(s) or taking care of siblings, thus sharing physical space most of the time. Lastly, during the COVID-19 online learning time, most of the participants chose to remain in their off-campus residence, rather than returning home. The few that did return home either did so because it saved them money, or because they had familial expectations to take care of their siblings.

### **You're Not Supposed to Leave Your Family**

All participants shared their parent(s)/guardian(s) wanted them to be successful in college and serve as one of the participants' biggest motivators for attending college. Participants also shared an expectation to stay close to home to attend college. For some, it was a mutual desire to

remain close to family, and for others it was a one-sided expectation from parent(s)/guardian(s). The definition of 'close' varied by participant and family.

Albert shared he was considering two different in-state institutions for college, both of which are about three to four hours away from his parents' home. He knew he wanted to stay in state, and his parents were supportive of him attending college. His dad attended college tours with him and was excited about his final choice. Albert shared his mom would like him to be closer. "My mom is now in the stage where like, she does not want to take her little baby to go away. And she's like, sad when I don't stay at home often or come visit." Albert's mom wants him to be successful in college, but she also wants him to be close to home. Sophia also shared she knew she wanted to stay close to family by attending an in-state institution. Her final choice institution was influenced by the amount of financial aid and scholarships she was awarded.

Dominique shared her family wanted her to stay close to home for college. Dominique is about an hour's drive away from home. She also had the unique opportunity to get scholarships for a Semester at Sea experience. She shared how her Chicana identity and strong ties to family impacted her study abroad and college location decisions.

My family's always been like, 'You're Chicana.' Like, yeah, 'You have to be strong.' And like, 'You're all about family.' Like, I don't know. So, I grew up with that those types of grandparents and parents as well. And like, I remember when I was gonna go abroad, or even when I was gonna come up here to [in-state institution], my grandpa was just like, 'you're not supposed to leave your family.' And I was just, like, what, but it's college? Like, I want to, like, experience this stuff. Or like, when I went abroad, I was like, I want to, like go see the world. And I don't know, I just felt like I was breaking his heart leaving too.

Dominique expressed throughout her interview how important family is to her throughout her interview and struggled with the idea of hurting her family by making the decision to move away for college.



### **They Think That I'm Staying Here**

Some of the participants shared more details about their plans to leave the state after college. Angel is planning to attend graduate school and is specifically looking at the possibility of attending an out-of-state graduate program. I asked if she had shared her plans to attend graduate school in another state with her parents. She shared, "...they definitely do not want me to leave [the state]... they do know that I want to continue [schooling], but I do think that they think that I'm staying here [in-state institution]." Angel has not shared all the details about her plans for graduate school, specifically the possible out-of-state locations.

Ester shared her younger brother is looking at college now, specifically at a couple of in-state schools. Ester shared her mom wants all of her kids to stay close by. "My mom really wants him to stay. She really wants all of us to stay here." Similar to Angel, Ester wants to move to another state after she graduates. But Ester has wanted to explore other places since before starting college. Uniquely, she expressed a desire to attend an out-of-state institution for her undergraduate degree. She applied to the same school all of her close friends applied to, and although she was accepted, she knew she could not afford to move to a different state. She received scholarships to two in-state schools but chose her current institution because it was further away from home than the other. Different from Angel, Ester has been clear with her mom about her intent to leave the state, which Ester knows will upset her mom.

### **Sharing Physical Space with Extended Family**

Some participants shared stories about sharing physical space with their parent(s)/guardian(s) and other family members. Albert grew up in a home that almost always included extended family or non-related renters. "So, whether it was family, friends, or just people we felt we could trust, we always rented out an extra room or two just so we could get

extra money.” Albert shared his two parents, his younger brother, and he would share a room, and at times a bed, to make room for the renters or family members staying with them.

Dominique and Kelly shared stories about sharing physical space with extended family members. Dominique grew up in a variety of homes with different guardians. Depending on her mom’s stability, she and her four siblings, whom she referred to as her babies, rotated between living with her mom, her biological dad, her stepdad, and her stepdad’s parents. Dominique’s physical space changed frequently, and so did the people with whom she shared space with. Kelly grew up living with her two younger brothers, one of your stepsisters, her mom and dad, and a cousin and uncle. Both Dominique and Kelly were adjusted to limited privacy in the home because of the amount of people living with them.

### **I Was Always Just Kind of at Her Hip**

Some participants shared stories of spending most of their time with their parent(s)/guardian(s). They shared space with their family for most of the day, excluding the time they were in school. They did chores together, ate meals together, ran errands together, and relaxed together as a family.

Angel shared, “I would often go with them [her parents] and run errands, we were very close too, we'd always do things together.” Similarly, Alejandro, described how spending time with his family once his dad was home from work was common. He shared, “First thing he did was take a shower [after getting home from work] and then afterwards we spend time together.”

Maria’s mom worked a lot to support her family, and was rarely home, but Maria spent time every day with her Aunties and Uncles, her extended family. Natalie also described the importance of being physically near family to help take care of each other when she explained that she moved out of state for one semester to take care of a family member. Natalie was also

close with her mom, sharing “We spent a lot of time together. I was always just kind of at her hip.”

### **I Have All This Space, This is Great**

Sharing space with family members, either by sharing bedrooms, other living spaces, or being physically together most of the time to complete chores and errands was common amongst most of the participants. Participants were accustomed to being in close physical proximity with family most of the time growing up, but that expectation and experience shifted once they started college.

Two participants specifically identified the significance of having a private bedroom since moving away for college. Albert shared that having his own room was new and a distinct difference between his current living situation and how he lived before coming to college. He shared,

So, I've always had the presence of, like, people in my house and me being used to like, like, small spaces or sharing a room with people. And I don't think that's necessarily bad or anything. But, like, being in like, my own room is definitely, like, an interesting experience. Like, oh, wow, I have all this space, this is great. I don't know what to do with it.

Having grown up sharing a bedroom with his parents and siblings, he was able to clearly identify that having his own private bedroom was a significant difference in how he used to live.

Similarly, Dominique very clearly identified a change in her values around physical space since coming to college. She shared,

Yeah, so I feel like I have seen a shift and like, I'm maybe valuing, like, space. Like I never, I never had space when I was like, growing up, like I was always surrounded by family, always surrounded by siblings, and like, coming up here, and just like, even, even the first two years, I was like, always with someone because I lived in a dorm with someone. But when I like started being alone a lot more often, like I came to realize, like, this is not as bad or scary as I thought it was gonna be like, I kind of like chillin in my

room with my lights and my dog like, I don't know, it's just, I feel like I've started to value that.

Dominique shared that being in close physical proximity with her family members brought her comfort, a sense of safety, but being alone was something she also coming to appreciate. While Albert and Dominique specifically named their new-found value of physical space and privacy, this shift in value also showed up in other participants through their choices during the COVID-19 remote learning time.

### **Might as Well Stay Here Just to Focus**

I asked each participant if they remained in their local residence or went home when the institution shifted to remote learning in Spring 2020. Six participants were renting a residence near campus and living with unrelated roommates; two were also living in a rental near campus but lived either with a spouse or a sibling; one participant lived in an on-campus apartment. Six of the participants chose to stay in their off-campus residence. Two went home because their parent(s)/guardian(s) needed them to take care of their younger siblings, and one was able to break her lease with the campus owned complex, so she was able to save money by going home. None of the participants said they needed to stay in town for a job. All of their jobs had also gone online during this time.

Dominique shared she did not go home during the COVID-19 remote learning time and described her home as “constant turmoil” and not having as much privacy. “It just feels like too much going on. And you, kind of just like, need your space. Like, you just want to be alone. And I've learned to value that so much with moving to [local university town]. It's like, I get to have my alone time.”

Albert, who was raised sharing a bedroom with family members and his house with extended family or friends, stayed in his off-campus residence. He described his decision to do so by sharing, “So I wanted a place to focus because being at home is a bit nuts... So, it's obviously distracting there, and I don't have my room there... So, it's like I don't have my own private place... if I have my own place here that I'm already using, might as well stay here just to focus for right now.”

Alejandro chose to stay in his off-campus residence, although later regretted it because his roommates ended up being very noisy and he described his parents as being quiet. He expressed being near campus and living with other students was beneficial for his academics. Natalie stayed in her off-campus residence, where she lives with her brother. She described the preference to stay in a location where she was better set up for academic success because she already had her study space set up there.

Kelly and Maria both went home to help take care of their younger siblings. They supported their siblings through their online learning while their parents worked. They were able to be home with their siblings during the day and provide the technical support needed as their siblings learned how to navigate online learning. Angel, who was able to break her lease with the campus-owned apartment complex, went home in Spring 2020 to save money.

### **Sharing Space While Attending College**

Two participants shared specific stories about sharing space with their parent(s)/guardian(s) while they were attending college. They described how the expectation of their schoolwork had changed since high school, and that managing that change while at home with their parent(s)/guardian(s) was stressful. Social identities played a significant role for both participants as they managed this change.

Kelly shared while at home during the pandemic, her mom did not understand why she was locking herself in her room, away from the family, for most of the day, and only came out of her room when she needed to eat. Kelly's mom expected her to help her clean houses, and Kelly even skipped classes a few times to help her mom. With Kelly being at home, it was expected that being back in the physical space meant she was return to her defined role in the family and not taking private time away from the family.

Natalie lived at home during the first part of her college experience, while she was attending a local community college. Natalie reported that sharing space with her mom during that time was a bit stressful. "Within a Latin or Hispanic household, it is definitely expected to abide by your parents, regardless of age or activities in your life. Trying to abide by my mom living there, but also trying to establish a sense of independence without being disrespectful. And now that I do live on my own [with her brother], there is just that complete separation, that if she comes to my house, and the kitchen's not clean, then it's the way I have my kitchen rather than disrespecting her kitchen, like if that makes sense."

### **Parents Wanted Their Students at Home**

I asked each participant who did not return home if their parent(s)/guardian(s) wanted them to move home. Alejandro answered with a quick, direct, "They did. Yes." Albert shared, "They [his parents] were a bit confused as to why I want to stay in [local university town] when like I could just be with my family." Natalie's parents also asked her to return home.

### **Feedback from Participants**

As a part of my member checking process, I emailed all participants about this finding of space being a class-influenced value. I asked if they saw their story reflected in my description, or not, or if they would like to add anything to the narrative. One participant, Kelly, shared she

appreciated the extra space on some days, but missed the more full space in others. She explained,

Even though getting work done has been easier and allowing my own space has allowed me to explore many other areas of my life compared to when I lived with my family, there are many moments where I do truly miss it. I miss the sense of a busy household always alive with something and distractions when I needed it most from my work; may it have been helping my mom cook while sharing laughs, talking to my dad while he worked outside, or watching my brothers and cousins play video games. Or simply having family there physically to remind me that everything would be alright and to remember what all my hard work would bring. At times it does feel really lonely especially after being in such a lively environment for many years. It's almost like a paradox in itself, I wish I could pick and choose every day what environment I want.

This comment has me wondering if the middle-class value of space is something that is adopted temporarily while in college, but may fade when the student leaves the university.

Dominique has since started graduate school and is attending a school in her hometown.

She shared,

I feel like when I left for college my family understood that college was hard so they gave me space to do my thing and I often created this space for myself without asking permission. It was much easier to set boundaries because I was physically far from home. I think this would have been much harder if I was at a university that was closer to home (which is what I am struggling with at the moment now that I am attending a university in my hometown).

Dominique shared she felt her experience with space was clearly seen throughout the shared stories, but this addition is another demonstration of the complexities and nuances in an individual's experience.

### **Discussion**

All of the participants' parent(s)/guardian(s) support their student's decision to attend college and want their student to be successful in school (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Turek, 2012; Wartman, 2009). Additionally, all the research participants identified their parent(s)/guardian(s) as one of the main motivators for attending college (Wartman, 2009). In interdependent cultures,

of which most working-class families of color identify, there is an expectation all family members remain close and connected (Valdez, 1996). This is in opposition to middle-class culture where families expect their children to leave the home for college and become independent (Markus & Kitayama, 2003). Learning the importance of connectedness informs “emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), which is a huge asset these students bring to their educational experience.

While all participants expressed their parent(s)/guardian(s) want them to be successful in college, balancing that with their parent(s)/guardian(s)’ simultaneous desire to have their children close to home, or at home, is difficult. Being physically far away from family members goes against a common working-class value of remaining close and connected (Moreno, 2021). Higher education professionals so often talk about gaining a sense of independence during college (Baxter Magolda, 1998), but this independence can put a strain on family relationships, which is particularly important for working-class, first-generation college students.

The COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity for a unique understanding and experience of space, including physical distance from most other humans and working and learning in a virtual space. It also gave an opportunity to better see how an individual’s value of space may be influenced by going to college. During the remote learning time, the participants had the choice of going home to complete their online learning. Most chose to stay in their off-campus residence and identified the privacy and space as helping them to be more academically successful. Having privacy and physical space you do not share with others is a middle-class privilege, a conflict in values introduced during college (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Gos, 1995). None of the participants identified space or privacy as a value growing up, but that changed once they started college. Several of the participants shared their parent(s)/guardian(s) wanted them to



move back home during the pandemic, to be near family, but the choice made by many to remain in their off-campus residence showed a difference in space expectations.

For Kelly and Maria, both of whom went home during the pandemic to take care of younger siblings, their defined role in their family, heavily influenced by gender, race, and class, overrode any change in values. This defined role dictated which physical space they needed to be in, and who they needed to be sharing space with to manage their responsibilities (Covarrubias et al., 2019). The stories shared by participants give insight into their experiences as working-class, first-generation college students. It is important to note their experiences are also influenced by their race and gender.

### **Implications**

Higher education professionals need to be cognizant of the variety of transitions students may be experiencing during college, including their change in physical space, and how we influence those transitions. If a student is sharing a bedroom with another student, that may bring them comfort, and feel normal to them. A student having their own bedroom may be a new experience for them, and it may take time to adjust to having privacy. A student may expect to study, or cook, or do other chores with fellow students because their working-class values taught them that they labor together with others. This can cause conflict if a first-generation, working-class student is living with a student who grew up with a housekeeper or a parent who managed the home such as the cooking and cleaning. Students who move away from their family may not be homesick simply because things are different on campus, they may feel like they went against their values when they physically left their family.

Residential housing staff can consider how their Residential Assistant (RA) training program prepares their RAs to interact and support first-generation and working-class students.

RAs can be prepared to support students who may be adjusting to having their own bed for the first time or who may be experiencing a values conflict and feeling like they left their family. Another consideration is how many residence halls have full-time cleaning staff. The participants in my study shared the importance of doing home chores together with their family, including cleaning and cooking, and shared many of their parent(s)/guardians(s) were employed as cleaners or in restaurants. Are your RAs trained to support students who will be interacting with cleaners and cooks that look like their parent or guardian? Does your institution allow on-campus students to bring vehicles with them? If not, have you considered if any of your students need to go home every weekend or in the evening to be with family, to help with family chores, and to support their siblings? Have you referred to your own campus, or another campus, as a “suitcase campus” as if students leaving the residence halls over the weekend is a negative reflection of the institution rather than a positive reflection of students being connected to their family?

For all faculty and staff on a college campus, I encourage you to consider how you value space. It is common for institutions to award private spaces, such as private offices or designated parking spaces as a reward for a job well done, or they are used as a recruitment tool for senior officers. The designation of space can be used to identify the hierarchy on a campus. I encourage higher education professionals to reflect on their role in their institution’s middle-class socialization process. How are you socializing your students to see private physical space as a precursor to academic success? How are you socializing students to see physical distance from family as the norm? Consider how your campus’s designation of space contributes to the middle-class socialization on your campus.

Lastly, COVID-19 introduced a unique bridge to different spaces. Some students were at home with their parent(s)/guardian(s) while completing their online learning. As virtual class

options continue, some students may choose to have their cameras off. They may not have the option of a private space, or family members may expect them to help cook or clean while they listen to a lecture. Having their camera turned off does not automatically mean a student is disengaged or not interested in the material. They may just be in a space that does not align with the college's expectations.

### **Conclusion**

Recognizing the differences between working-class and middle-class values matter, as does acknowledging the role higher education institutions play in socializing students to assume middle-class values. As more first-generation college students, many of whom are from the working class, attend college, higher education professionals have an ethical responsibility to consider how we are impacting these students in all areas of their life. Many first-generation college students share their parent(s)/guardian(s) are one of their biggest motivations for attend college, and it matters how institutions of higher education may impact those relationships.

This study revealed space plays a significant role in first-generation, working-class experiences at college. The space may be geographical space between the student and family, choosing to remain in a home with more private space, such as a private bedroom, during college, or how class values influence the expectations of family members in a space. I provided examples and questions for higher education professionals to use for reflection and program developments. To best serve our first-generation, working-class students, we must be aware of the middle-class socialization process that is occurring on college campuses, especially, the middle-class value of space.

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## CHAPTER V

### HARD WORKER: FIRST-GENERATION, WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING A HARD WORK ETHIC WITH NON-PHYSICAL WORK

#### **Abstract**

Using a constructionism epistemology, phenomenological methodology, and data collection methods of interviews, researcher diary, and panel of experts, the author found being a strong worker to be valued by both the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s), but difficult to demonstrate through coursework. The author used Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (2005) model and Hurst's Renegade, Loyalist, and Double Agent study (2010) to analyze the middle-class college socialization experiences of nine first-generation, working-class students. The working-class parent(s)/guardian(s) defined working hard as physical labor. It was difficult for their student to demonstrate they are working hard when their work does not require physical exertion.

#### **Introduction**

Work smarter, not harder, is a common saying meant to encourage someone to find the most efficient way to complete a task. Does this common saying imply working hard is not valued? By whom? What if your task, or job, will always demand hard work? What if your job cannot be automated, but rather will always require physical labor to complete?

First-generation, working-class college students may experience a conflict of values when they start college (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Gos, 1995). First-generation, working-class college students often say they are attending college not just for themselves, but for their entire family

(Wartman, 2009). Higher education is seen as the vehicle to upward social mobility, to do better, but it also comes with the expectations one leaves their class of origin behind to better fit in with the middle-class (Ardoin & martinez, 2019; Borrego, 2008; Reay, 2005). If higher education as an institution actively engages in the process of socializing these students into the middle class, there is a risk of students developing poor relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s) and leaving school because their motivation for attending college (family) is being harmed in the process. Even if a first-generation, working-class student does persist and graduate from college, colleges must consider their ethical responsibility of preparing students for a potential impact on their relationship with their parent(s)/guardian(s) as a result of their educational process.

The data for this article comes from my dissertation research, which explored how, if at all, a relationship between a first-generation, working-class student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is influenced by the student attending college, with a specific emphasis on exploring if class socialization is one of the factors impacting this relationship.

My primary research question was:

- Q1 How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

My sub-research questions were:

- Q2 What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship?
- Q3 What role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship?

My study revealed a strong work ethic, or working hard, is a value held by the working-class parent(s)/guardian(s) and their first-generation college students. The parent(s)/guardian(s) defined working hard as physical work, work that has individuals physically exhausted at the end of the day. The students are working hard in their classes, but experienced difficulty explaining

to their parent(s)/guardian(s) they are working hard when they are sitting at their computer doing schoolwork. They had difficulty explaining they were tired after their schoolwork because they were mentally exhausted, but not physically tired.

### **Literature Review**

This brief literature review will demonstrate work impacts one's values, and the values and lessons parent(s)/guardian(s) teach their children. It will also demonstrate being a "hard worker" can mean different things in different settings. Lastly, this literature review will give a brief overview of the main theoretical frameworks I used when building the study and analyzing the data.

"Members of different social classes, by virtue of enjoying (or suffering) different conditions of life, come to see the world differently - to develop different conceptions of social reality, different aspirations and hopes and fears, different conceptions of the desirable" (Kohn, 1964, p. 471). To be clear, these values are not true for every person within a specific class. There are certainly individual and family differences, and there are some folks who can hold values more commonly associated with either class. These values are to provide a general framework, an overarching understanding of some value differences that are common between working-class and middle-class folks.

While working-class and middle-class parents share some values in their children such as honesty (Kohn, 1964), there are notable differences in values that have been observed and remain true through decades of research. Working-class parents, specifically those working manual labor jobs, value different behavior demonstrations by their children in comparison to middle-class parents working non-manual labor jobs (Kohn, 1964). Middle-class parents want their children to be excited about learning, to be happy, to share, and to be healthy while

working-class parents want their children to be tidy, to obey adults, and to please adults (which could be translated to obeying and pleasing authority), what Duvall (1946) referred to as developmental versus traditional values, respectively. Working-class parents value conformity to external expectations and care that their children do not go against rules, while middle-class parents value self-direction and care about their children's motives (Duvall, 1946).

Kohn (1964) argues there exist three main differences in working-class and middle-class jobs that result in parents in the different classes holding different values: Middle-class jobs require the manipulation of relationships and ideas, and working-class jobs require the manipulations of things; middle-class jobs require more self-direction and working-class jobs require following a strict set of rules; and lastly, middle-class jobs require independence to get ahead and working-class jobs require collective effort, or sometimes unionizing, to advocate for better pay and conditions. It is in-part because of these differences in occupational expectations parents pass down different values to their children (Kohn, 1964).

In *Class, Codes, and Control: Theoretical Studies towards Sociology of Language*, Bernstein (1971) describes the working-class social structure as position-oriented and the professional/managerial class, or middle-class, as person-oriented. The position-oriented family is rule-bound, where laws are decontextualized and are meant to be followed, and each family member plays a role regardless of their personhood. A working-class parent is told what to do at work, so they tell their children what to do at home, meaning they are teaching them the rules of the world and how to be successful at their future job. Peckham (1995) describes his father's language patterns by stating, "Language use in my home was characteristically unidirectional - our father telling us what to do. There was never room for discussion or negotiation; at best, we would ask questions, make requests, or defend ourselves" (p. 266). In person-oriented families,

the parents are teaching their children to become their own person, to create their role, and to think for themselves.

Parents who teach deference, obedience, and constraint are indeed teaching valuable skills that will have a place in all adolescents' lives; however, when taught singularly likely make it more difficult for adolescents to stand out or excel in academic and/or employment settings when skills such as assertiveness are rewarded and necessary. (Jones et al., 2018, p. 630)

Lauren H. Weaver, a faculty member from a Mennonite "hard worker" upbringing, writes about how the term "hard worker" was a compliment growing up in a community that values physical labor, particularly physical labor that is done for the benefit of your family or neighbor, but the same term holds negative connotations if used in the academy (Weaver, 1993). She explains if someone in the academy is seen as a hard-worker, they are viewed as, "a drudge or unimaginative, passive, confirming person - someone who will serve on routine committees and organization conferences. This person, too, is often exploited" (Weaver, 1993, p. 120).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

My research was guided by two theoretical frameworks, Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (2005) and Hurst's Loyalist, Renegade, and Double Agent (2010). Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) is an intentional critique of previously dominant class theories, including Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital. Yosso's theory includes six forms of capital, "aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant" (p. 77). This theory centers race and specifically identifies Communities of Color as the experts and informants for this theory.

Hurst's (2010) identified three different methods students used to manage the opposition between their working-class roots with the university's middle-class environment and expectations. Students either chose to be a loyalist, when they rejected the middle-class values forced on them by their peers, faculty, and the institution; a renegade, when they chose to

assimilate to the new middle-class values, or they chose to be a double agent when they moved between different social groups with different class values (Hurst, 2010).

### **Positionality Statement**

I was raised in a blue-collar, working-class family. Extended family served as my primary guardians until I was a teenager, at which time I then transitioned to living with my mom and dad. My dad, a truck driver/heavy equipment operator/general construction worker, and my mom, a waitress/fast food cashier, both work laborious jobs that are hard on their feet, back, and overall physical health. Just as their parents taught them, they taught me that being physically tired is the sign of a hard day's work. Furthermore, I was taught that being a hard worker was valuable, a mark of character you should care about achieving. I was taught being physically lazy is unacceptable.

I lived at home while attending college. I worked several jobs at a time including serving as a private math tutor, working in my college's orientation office, and waitressing. My parents wanted me to be academically successful and knew I was working a lot of hours with tutoring and orientation, but we usually only talked about my waitress job. It was a job they could visualize, a job they could relate to, and they wanted me to learn lessons that can only be taught through laborious positions. They wanted me to understand the significance of dedicating my body, my physical labor, to something, the importance of maintaining stamina through tiring shifts, and to get prepared for a lifetime of labor.

While my full-time employment is a white-collar job in higher education, physically laborious work is important to me. My husband works in construction, and I frequently help him with his woodworking projects or other projects around the house. I am always quick to offer to help a friend move or do some other physically tiring task. I work at least one server shift with

my mom when I visit home to help ease her workload for the day. I think I work hard every day in all areas of my life, and I intentionally commit to physical work to stay connected to my family, my community, and my values.

I think there is something grounding about physical labor. Physically working hard with and for other humans is something I see as a foundation to our species. The lack of value I see placed on physical labor is an ethical concern. The lack of value can be seen through wages, lack of prestige associated with the work, or the diminishing offerings of trade education in high schools (auto, woodshop, etc.). Losing connection with the physical labor required to live (farming, ranching, construction, manufacturing) is a lost connection to our history and our connections as fellow humans.

### **Methods**

My study used a constructionism epistemology, phenomenological methodology, and three data collection methods: participant interviews, a researcher diary, and a panel of experts. Constructionism researchers argue this epistemology is not all subjectivism, meaning is not created from nothing, but rather there is a level of objectivism, there is something that is an object from which we humans then construct meaning (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism speaks of intentionality, referring to relatedness, which suggests an unbreakable relationship between the conscious subject (the research participant) and the object of the research participant's consciousness (college-going experience) (Crotty, 1998).

Phenomenology is generally defined as the science of phenomena (van Manen, 2015), and is the study of essence or what is, known as the *qualis* (Errasti-Ibarrando et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2013). Phenomenology demands for the researcher to engage in bracketing, or setting aside their own pre-understandings of a phenomena (Jones et al., 2013). van Manen (1990)

explains, “The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much” (p. 46). I find bracketing or completely ignoring my pre-understanding unrealistic, so I engaged in bridling (Dahlberg, 2006).

Described by Dahlberg et al. (2008), there are three components of bridling: Firstly, bridling includes the “restraining of one’s pre-understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of meaning and thus limit the research options” (pp. 129-130). While I know my college-going experience has impacted my relationship with my family, I intentionally set up my research question to include the possibility of the college experience having a positive, negative, or no impact on the participants’ relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Second, it is an “open and alert attitude of activity waiting for the phenomenon to show up and display itself within the relationship” (p. 130). During each interview, I asked participants to talk to me about their parent(s)/guardian(s) in a variety of ways, giving different opportunities for the potential phenomenon to show itself. Lastly, it allows the phenomenon to present itself by looking forward, not backward (Ellet, 2011). The relationship each participant has with their parent(s)/guardians(s) is always evolving, and even the past can continue to look different based on new life experiences. A phenomenon is not set singularly in the past.

I conducted semi-structured interviews as my main data collection method. These data were triangulated with feedback from my researcher diary and a panel of experts. Truth and validity are given to an experience or phenomenon through language, specifically using the same consistent language to identify the phenomenon (von Eckartsberg, 1986). My interviews had



three distinct parts: Contextualization, Apprehending the Phenomenon, and Clarifying the Phenomenon (Bevan, 2014, p. 139).

Researcher diaries are unique to each researcher and can serve a variety of purposes. As researchers document their personal thoughts, feelings, and decisions in their diary, the diary writer can see how their knowledge is realized and created, thus leading to “epistemological awareness” (Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009, p. 300). Engin (2011) writes, “the study of knowledge construction is scaffolded by the journal” (pp. 297-298). I used my diary to record decisions and progress I make every day, reactions to the data collection and analysis process, analysis exercises unrelated to my data to continuously practice data analysis, periodic reflections on my progress, tasks to be done in the future, and insights gained from my panel of experts.

I requested support from four professionals who worked directly or indirectly with my population of study at my research site to gain insight from experts who are intimately familiar with my population sample. I convened the panel of four once every three weeks for 45 minutes to process through my progress, check if my preliminary data analysis themes were aligning with their understanding of working-class, first-generation college students’ experience, what deficit language they commonly saw in literature involving first-generation college students, and in what asset-based practices they were engaging.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

The study took place at large, public, land-grant university in the Mountain West region during the spring 2021 semester. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the institution had over 34,000 students, with 68% of those students being in-state residents, 24% identifying as students of color, and one in every four students being a first-generation college student.

In total, 13 students expressed interest in the study, and nine completed the interview. I spent between 45 and 120 minutes on Zoom with each participant. I offered each participant the opportunity to be identified by a pseudonym. I made the initial offer at the beginning of the interview and followed up to confirm their choice at the end of the interview in case they wanted to change their selection. One participant chose a pseudonym while the rest were comfortable being identified by their real name.

Of my nine participants, seven (78%) identified as women or female and two (22%) identified as men or male. Eight (89%) identified as students of color, specifically with six identifying as Latinx or Hispanic, one identifying as Indonesian, and one identifying as Native American and Spaniard, and one (11%) participant identified as white. Three (33%) participants shared their parents immigrated to the U.S. before they were born, and one (11%) shared they are undocumented. Four (44%) identified religion or spirituality playing a significant role in their life. All (100%) participants were raised in the same state as the research site. All (100%) participants identified as having a biological mom or dad as one of their guardians, while almost all mentioned other folks also serving in a guardian role (biological aunts and uncles, community aunts and uncles, grandparents, stepparents, older siblings).

**Table 1***Participant Data.*

Participant	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Documentation	Religion/ Spirituality	Parents Immigrated
Alejandro	Man	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	No
Dominique	Woman	Chicana	Documented	Not significant	No
Albert	Male	Latino/Hispanic	Documented	Not significant	Yes
Maria	Female	Indonesian	Undocumented	Significant	Yes
Sophia	Woman	Latinx	Documented	Not significant	No
Natalie	Woman	Hispanic	Documented	Significant	Yes
Kelly	Woman	Latina	Documented	Significant	No
Angel	Woman	Native American and Spaniard	Documented	Not significant	No
Constance	Woman	White	Documented	Not significant	No

**Data Analysis**

After having transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim, I read through each interview for all statements relevant to the phenomenon. Creswell (2003) refers to these statements as “significant statements” and stresses that researcher should “treat each statement as having equal worth, and work to develop a list of non-repetitive non-overlapping statements” (p. 193). Moustakas (1994) provides a two-step test to apply to each statement to determine if it is significant: a) Does it contain information that is necessary for understanding the phenomenon, and b) Is it possible to label the statement? These statements were then grouped into “meaning units” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193).

**Validity and Reliability/Truth**

Part of the rigor includes my positionality statement. I verbally shared with my participants information about my identities and my motivation for completing this research and acknowledged how all of these factors may influence the research. I also asked all of my research participants to participate in member checking (Stake, 1995). Lastly, I triangulated the data.

## Shared Stories

### **Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are Hard Workers**

Almost all of the participants' parent(s)/guardian(s) worked jobs that included physical labor. Albert's dad is a landscaper/contractor who works for his local parks department, and his mom cleans homes. Alejandro's dad is a stucco worker, and his mom maintains the home. Angel's dad owns a small landscaping business and her mom used to work as a public benefits processor but no longer works due to a disability. Dominique's grandpa was a taxi driver. Her mom has served in a variety of hospitality roles including waitressing and stripping, and currently is a dance instructor, and her dad works for the local rec center teaching sports. Maria's mom is a Certified Nursing Assistant. Kelly's dad works in construction in a variety of home remodeling trades and her mom cleans homes. Natalia's mom is a lead custodian in local schools. Sophia's mom is a paraprofessional in an elementary school, and serves as a translator. Her stepdad is a cook and her biological dad is an insurance agent. Constance's mom maintains the home and her dad works in information technology. He does not work for one employer full-time, rather his IT specialty means he is hired for specific projects and has gaps in employment.

I asked each participant to tell me about their parent(s)/guardian(s), and every participant was quick to describe them as a hard worker. Albert said his dad, "puts his back into everything." Albert told me his dad does not take it easy at work; he works a physically laborious job, and he works hard to do a good job. Natalie described her mom as being very independent, as working really hard to raise five kids and pay the bills. Maria described her mom as being drained, especially when she picked up extra nursing shifts. She described, "When it comes to work, it's just, I feel, like it's really physically, like I could just see her drained. And she picks up extra shifts in the afternoon. So, it's always sort of like draining for her to come home at night."

Alejandro shared a story where he insulted his dad's work ethic as a kid. I remember growing up, like, like a fool. I didn't know. I was like, seven years old. I'll never forget it. I was mad this one time my father came home, like, he just sat on the couch, and I called him lazy. His look that he gave me, like kind of disappointed. I didn't know. I didn't know how hard it is to work the summer with him. It was terrible job and for him to do that, day in and out, he never talked about it. But once you experience it, you don't need his explanation.

This interaction took place over a decade ago, and it was clearly very impactful for Alejandro. It was clear his dad is a hard worker and it was important for Alejandro to also know his dad is a hard worker.

### **Work is Significant**

Many of the participants described their parent(s)/guardian(s)' work as being significant, specifically that work dictated their schedule and home life. Albert described his dad as sometimes being very tired when coming home from work and not wanting to interact with the family so he could rest. He described, "So sometimes he comes home, he's very tired, he's very dirty, and is like 'don't talk to me, I'm really exhausted.'" Alejandro described his normal evening with his family at home was based around what his dad needed to do to be ready for work the next day. He said his dad would come home, shower, they would eat together as a family, then his dad would go to bed because he needed to be up early the next day.

Natalie described how her parents' work defined their daily schedule and outings or activities she would have to miss.

We couldn't go do things just because work got in the way. Or once she did get home, her feet would hurt. Or there was a routine at the end of night where she would come home, we would cook dinner, get the table ready, my dad would come home, we'd eat. And then they would go to bed and get ready because they had to wake up early. So, there wasn't a lot of interaction. And it was clearly, like defined by work.

Natalie later spoke about work impacting their family when she said, "They [her parents] were very dedicated to work, that it minimized our family time and the quality of the, you know, 30

minutes, we had to eat before they had to go to bed and get ready for the next day.” Natalie also spoke about the significance of work when she described accountability, “...whether you're accountable to work, which my parents were, that was very clear....”

### **Teaching the Importance of Being a Hard Worker**

I asked the participants about their own values and several of them described being a hard worker or having a strong work ethic as an important value of theirs. They either described themselves as being hard workers, or their parents taught them to work hard.

Maria’s mom works a physically laborious job, and she had to learn how to do the job in her second language, English. “So, all that time my mom told me to work hard, also like, she, she probably experienced that too. Like she probably experienced, a lot of people looking down on her telling her like, you won't do this, like you're like, go back to your country.” Maria recognizes that her mom had to do extra work, learn a second language, to get into her field, and work through judgments made about her because she is an immigrant, and her mom cares Maria is also a hard worker. When I asked Kelly about her values she responded with, “I would classify myself as like hard working.” Sophia shared similar sentiments when she said, “my mom has always like, talked about the importance of like having a strong work ethic.”

Natalie shared she, like her parents, value working hard. She said, “Similarly, like very headstrong with working and probably biting off more than I can chew, especially during work in class and academics.” She went on to describe how this shows up for her in her classwork. She described her classmates as being too reliant on professors to answer all of their questions, and that they do not see the correlation between their work ethic and their results:

Like, in regards to, like, the syllabus, for example, oftentimes professors will refer to the syllabus, or instead of answering questions, will refer to the syllabus just because a lot, the majority, of the initial answers are in there. Compared to my peers ... I don't feel I

don't resonate with them just because I feel like that hard working that like, kind of put your head down and get to work or figure it out attitude that I was given just doesn't translate the same. Or the accountability of like, either like studying or the lack of studying and kind of the, the work you put in is the work you get out and that's on you.

### **What if Working Hard Does Not Include Physical Work?**

Throughout my interviews with the participants, it was clear their parent(s)/guardian(s) were hard workers, work was a significant piece of their life, and they wanted their kids to also value hard work. The participants shared the value of hard work, but they described their work as looking different in college, specifically being all mental and not including physical labor.

Maria said she sometimes has difficulty explaining to her mom that college is mentally draining. When I asked Maria what she thought might be different about her relationship with her mom if her mom had gone to college, Maria responded by saying, "I feel like it would have it would have changed, she would have understood why it's difficult to go to college, why like sometimes it can be mentally draining, taking four exams per semester per subject or go sometimes even eight exams per semester." Maria explained her mom works hard, and so does she, but there are differences in what the hard work looks like.

Dominique and her mom helped her siblings with their online schoolwork. Her siblings were struggling with the online learning routine and expectations, and Dominique had to stand up for her siblings. She said she would tell her mom, "Like, being online is hard mom, like, cut them some slack. Like, it's not the easiest thing to do." While not directly about her own schoolwork, Dominique needed to explain to her mom that online learning is hard work, even if it is not physical.

Angel has a strong work ethic, like her parents taught her. Her brother has worked as mechanic and a variety of other trades. Angel described how her parents can understand her brother's work and how it can be tiring and take a lot of time. Conversely, when she has to spend

a lot of time prepping for an upcoming exam, Angel described her parents' reaction as, "When I tell my mom, I can't come home, because I have big exams next week, she didn't really understand that I have to study a lot for them."

Kelly went home at the beginning of the pandemic to take care of her younger siblings and talked to me about it was difficult to explain to her mom and dad the amount of work she needed to do. She shared, "Um, I think like, in the beginning, we had a couple of arguments of like, something like, 'I don't understand why you like, put yourself in your room and just come down to eat.' And all this stuff. I'm like, I'm like, because I'm in meetings. I'm in classes." Kelly later said her mom and dad started to understand how much time school can take, but not completely. "And I think like, it wasn't until the very end where they were like, 'okay, we get it, you're in school, you're in classes so much.' But even then, it was just kind of like silly. 'I don't understand why school takes up, like, literally your entire day.'" Kelly really cares about doing well in her classes, which takes a lot of time, and it was difficult for her mom to see how her strong work ethic was translating into her schoolwork.

Natalie lived with her brother in a townhome near the institution at the time of the interview, but she lived at home with her mom while she attended a local community college. Natalie said not living with her mom helped them improved their relationship. She shared they clashed while she was attending community college and living at home because she was, "needing to complete assignments ahead of household chores or like needing to meet deadlines and like that sitting down at a computer in class can be exhausting and just kind of not being able to see eye to eye on those aspects." While living at home, it was important Natalie contribute physical labor around the home, like cleaning. If Natalie had to work on an assignment before



she started her home chores, it would frustrate her mom, “I believe she interpreted as I'm just sitting on the computer avoiding helping her.”

Now that Natalie is not living at home, she will talk with her mom about being tired if its physical exhausting, but not if she is mentally tired.

Just because I feel like after the attempts made over the years, I feel like she still can't grasp the mental exhaustion. Even though she has experienced it with her works, monthly they have to do all day kind of like re-education courses. They sit through lectures essentially. And at the end of those days, she does come home tired and mentally exhausted. And so I've tried to reach out and kind of and relate it to that. But I think she still doesn't grasp it just because it's not a prominent part of her work life or her experience.

During the member checking process, I learned Dominique had started graduate school. She was attending a university in her hometown. When I asked for feedback around this shared story of work ethic, Dominique shared that being in her hometown while attending school has made it more difficult to set boundaries so she has time to complete her school work. She shared it was easier to make time for her classwork when she was living further away from home, but being physically close to family again has required her to rethink how she needs to manage her schoolwork.

### **Discussion**

All participants shared the importance of learning how to work hard from their parent(s)/guardian(s), and how the value of working hard helps them be successful in their college classes (Yosso, 2005). They shared their parent(s)/guardian(s)' vision of hard work is physical. None of the participants said their parent(s)/guardian(s)' work is not also mentally tiring, but that they are primarily tired from the physical exertion required by their jobs. The participants also shared that work is a significant part of their parent(s)/guardian(s)' lives, and thus a significant part of their own life.

The participants described this difference in work expectations as causing some arguments with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Furthermore, some participants, specifically women, described the physical labor they were expected to perform at home, regardless of their academic course load (Bernstein, 1971). These participants were expected to prioritize physical chores that contributed to their family's needs over their homework (Weaver, 1993), and their working-class upbringing taught them to please the adults in their life (Duvall, 1946), which included both their parent(s)/guardian(s) and their faculty members. These tensions impact the students and their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s).

### **Implications**

So, if work is significant, being a hard worker is important, and working hard is defined by the level of physical exertion required, how do first-generation, working-class students talk with their parent(s)/guardian(s) about being mentally tired from their academic coursework? How do they demonstrate they also value working hard when working hard looks like they are just sitting at the computer? I ask these questions as reflection questions for the reader, specifically higher education professionals. My participants were unsure how to have these conversations effectively, and higher education professionals hold a responsibility to help them figure out to do so. The students were not describing a conflict in values between their home life and school life, which is common for first-generation, working-class students (Brooks-Terry, 1988; Gos, 1995), but that the value showed up differently on campus than at home.

I encourage higher education professionals to consider how they can help prepare first-generation, working-class students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) for this tension. Student Affairs staff could create a language coaching program, similar to programs that help students translate their experiences onto their resumes, but supporting students in translating their college

experience into a class-familiar framework. Counseling centers could consider providing class-conscious counseling services and support groups specifically for first-generation and/or working-class students so they can process their class experiences on campus and at home with others. Faculty and staff can include salient identities on their office windows, in their syllabi, and in their email signature. A student struggling with class tension could more easily seek out a faculty or staff member who has also experienced the tension if they proactively identified themselves as first-generation or working-class.

Staff that support parent and families have several programmatic considerations based on these data. Staff need to consider the name of their programs. Several of my participants identified significant guardians in their life that were not their biological parents. Is it evident through your program or office name family can be chosen or defined through means other than being parents? An inclusive program name can be welcoming, while a more restrictive name can be exclusionary. Beyond the name, how are staff members proactively connecting with parents or guardians? What potential barriers exist that make it difficult for parents or guardians to find your support staff? Do your printed materials require your readers to speak English? Do you rely on email communication? Many working-class jobs do not involve a computer or much email communication, if any. If your university provides a newsletter for parents and guardians, how can you describe the hard work their student is putting in for their degree? How can you describe the hard work required for a college degree in a class-familiar framework?

We need to consider our ethical responsibility to these students. Higher education institutions actively recruit first-generation, working-class students, and we sell the many benefits of earning a higher education degree, including the ability to make more money over their lifetime. Most bachelor's degree prepare students to work in middle-class or white-collar

jobs, a very different work environment than those of their working-class parents. The path to social mobility also comes with negative impacts, including tension between a student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed working-class, first-generation college students experience tension with their parent(s)/guardian(s) over their shared value of working hard, because working hard in college often does not involve physical labor. The literature review and shared stories show work and a strong work ethic as an important experience and value in working-class families, thus also important for these students. I provided reflection questions for higher education professionals to consider to improve how they support first-generation students coming from working-class families.

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## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to offer a summary of my five preceding chapters, a synopsis of other themes found in my data, my thoughts for future research, and a brief reflection from my researcher diary. This dissertation project has been my most significant and challenging professional project to date. I am incredibly thankful for this opportunity.

#### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter I introduced the reader to the significance of the study, key terms I used in my research, and my research question. The purpose of this study was to explore how, if at all, a relationship between a first-generation, working-class student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is influenced by the student attending college, with a specific emphasis on exploring if class socialization is one of the factors impacting this relationship.

My primary research question was:

- Q1 How does attending college at a 4-year public university influence first-generation, working-class students' relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

My sub-research questions were:

- Q2 What role does middle-class socialization that occurs on a 4-year public university campus play in impacting this relationship?
- Q3 What role does online learning/remote learning during this COVID-19 period play in impacting this relationship?

Chapter II included my literature review and theoretical frameworks. My literature review included details about the difference between middle-class and working-class values,



policies and practices higher education uses to socialize students into the middle-class, and existing research on first-generation college students and relationships with their families. My two main theoretical frameworks were Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model and Hurst's (2010) Loyalist, Renegade, and Double Agent study. I was also influenced by Bourdieu's (1986) Forms of Capital theory and Liu's (2011) Social Class Worldview Model.

Chapter III reviewed my research methods. I used a constructionism epistemology, phenomenology methodology, and three data collection methods of interviews, a researcher diary, and a panel of experts. I described my research participants and setting. A total of nine students participated in an interview, and the interviews took place during the spring 2021 semester when most students were learning remotely or online due to COVID-19. Eight of my nine participants identified as students of color, and I challenged myself to consistently think about intersecting identities, specifically race, class, and gender, and recognize the significance of those intersections. I described my data analysis, how I ensured my results were truthful, and I provided a researcher stance so my reader could understand the identities and experiences I brought to the research.

Chapter IV was my first of two manuscripts. This first manuscript focused on my significant finding of space being a middle-class value and how space played a role in the students' lives. Chapter V was my second manuscript which highlighted how the students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) valued being a hard worker, but that parent(s)/guardian(s) defined hard work by physically working hard and the students had difficulty explaining why doing their coursework was also hard work.

### More Shared Stories

I chose to write my two manuscripts about the shared stories around space and working hard. My manuscripts demonstrate my current analysis of those shared stories, but I know my analysis and understanding of these shared stories will continue to develop and change overtime as I continue to grow and develop in my research skills and gain more lived experiences. These are only two of the themes that came through the data.

Several of the participants either had parents that immigrated to the U.S. before they were born or they immigrated with their parents during their childhood. All participants shared stories about their parent(s)/guardian(s) being their biggest motivators for attending college, but this went deeper for those with immigrant parents, or who immigrated themselves. They shared they could not let their parent(s)/guardian(s)' work to immigrate to the U.S. go to waste, that they had to attend college and be academically successful to make their parent(s)'/guardian(s)' sacrifices worth it. Albert described it as a, "don't fail us type of thing."

I asked all of the participants about their values growing up and if they had found new values since starting college. Several of them shared they now valued their mental health. Some students talked with their parent(s)/guardian(s) about their mental health while others did not want to put that stress on them. Furthermore, the students also shared they now cared about their parent(s)/guardian(s)' mental health. Several participants shared they asked their parent(s)/guardian(s) how they were doing, how they were holding up at work, if they had anything stressful happening and how they were managing the stress and the mental health impacts from it. Parent(s)/guardian(s) had mixed responses to those conversations. Some were willing to share, but others focused on the physical exhaustion from their job or the physical demands of the family.

Several of the participants shared religion played a big part of their life, or at least it did growing up. All of these participants described their parent(s)/guardian(s) as being nervous about the impact college may have on them, specifically being introduced to drinking, drugs, or other behaviors not approved by the church. I found this to be an interesting intersecting identity to consider in my analysis. Some students described their parent(s)/guardian(s) as being “traditional”, but the root of their traditionalism was different. One participant said it was due to their religious values, another said it was their country-of-origin values, another said it was values based on their race.

Another shared story that came through was a theme of “strict” parent(s)/guardian(s). The students shared that their home life was scheduled, with the schedule being mostly dictated by the parent(s)/guardian(s)’ work demands, and that their parent(s)/guardian(s) were strict. The parent(s)/guardian(s) had specific expectations for their child and enforced their expectations frequently. This was very different than college where the staff and faculty emphasized choice and being in control of your time, your schedule, your commitments, etc. The students described the switch of being in position-orientation environment to a person-oriented environment.

Additionally, many of the students shared the same culture shock of transitioning from a high school with mostly students of color to a university where the majority of students are white. One student described the shock of the mostly white environment as, “What the hell is this?” This shared story had me thinking about the parent(s)/guardian(s) and how scared they may have been with their student moving away to attend a university, being further away from the church, and being with mostly white people.

Lastly, I think it is significant that every participant mentioned at least one resource offered at the institution that helped support them. The programs ranged from federally funded

programs to institution specific programs through housing or cultural centers. The students were able to identify the program(s) by name and give specific examples about how the program, or staff in the program, supported them in their academic success.

### **Future Plans**

This dissertation process was another reminder that the more you know, the more you see you do not know. I am finishing this dissertation with more questions than answers. Through my data analysis, I have had so many more questions come to mind. As I re-read each transcript, there are dozens of times when I wish I had asked a question to gain deeper understanding. As I piece together the shared stories, I have so many questions about the themes. Are they shared experiences for the same reasons? Are they shared experiences that will only remain true for this specific period of time? Did I do enough to understand how COVID-19 was impacting the participants? Can any of us even comprehend how COVID-19 is impacting all of us right now? Did I account for how COVID-19 would impact me as a researcher, not just my research methods?

I have several thoughts for potential future research or impact I want to make with my dissertation. I would like to follow up with the participants a couple of years after graduation to explore potential values conflicts. If the participants are working full-time in a white-collar job, or at least a job that does not require physical labor, I would be interested in learning how that experience may be impacting their relationship(s) with their parent(s)/guardians(s). I would like to dive deeper into the theme of work ethic, how it shows up for them in their current job, how they talk about work with their parent(s)/guardian(s), what questions their parent(s)/guardian(s) ask, if any, about their jobs, and how they are navigating a middle-class work environment.

Work is significant in working-class families, and a first-generation, working-class student that is working towards a non-physical laborious job is significant and worthy of further exploration.

I want to write some reflection pieces for higher education publications, specifically more casual writings like blog posts that are easy for readers to digest. I want to continue to reflect on my ability to do justice by participants of color as a white person. I want to provide reflection on my experience doing research during COVID-19. I have some sense of how my mental health was impacted and how my connection with other humans was impacted. But what about my worldview? Did it temporarily or permanently shift? I want to support current or future doctoral students, specifically first-generation college students, by providing concrete actions that helped me through this process. I want to write for publications like the NASPA Journal, Inside Higher Ed, or graduate program newsletters.

Every participant identified at least one specific program on campus that helped them be successful. All these programs are currently being directly impacted on campus through an organizational realignment process. I think my dissertation can play a small role in supporting these programs through the shift in their reporting structures and resources. I want to write an executive summary that highlights the significant impact the programs had on my participants and share those with university administration.

All of my themes are worthy of future research. The topics are interesting and significant. I am excited about future research partnerships that could help me dive deeper into those topics. For example, I identified religion as a shared story amongst the participants, but I know my understanding of religion and its cannon is limited. I look forward to doing future research and learning from colleagues and fellow scholars.

## Reflection

This doctoral journey, particularly this dissertation process, has been significant. My learning journey took me down many unexpected paths. I had more than one moment where I doubted if I was enough, if I could write a final dissertation that was worthy enough of graduating. I will share this one entry from my researcher journal to close. On September 15 I wrote,

I will trust myself and find joy in the dissertation process by remaining focused on the learning, to remember that I am a beginner, a total novice, and this is my first time doing this process, so it is expected that I would make mistakes. I will remember that while this process is hard, it should be hard. The “hardness” demonstrates my learning, my vulnerability, and my desire to grow. If I didn’t think this was hard, that would probably be a bad sign. I recognize the significance of what I am doing, and the significant learning and transformation I have gone through in the past 6 years, and that change and growth matters. It is enough. I am enough. I am on my edge. I am pushing my edge further out. And how lucky am I to be engaged in hard work, to be challenged so.

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APPENDIX A  
WORKING-CLASS SELF-DETERMINATION  
CONSIDERATIONS

All individuals and families that identify as working-class do not look the same. You may have been raised with a clear understanding of your social class, but it's also normal to be unsure. To help you determine if you come from a working-class background, here are some statements for reflection. If you identify with *most* of these (not all), you may be working-class. If you are still unsure after reflection, I am happy to process with you to help you make a determination.

### **Statements for Reflection**

- My parent(s)/guardian(s) hold jobs that require physical labor, standing on their feet most of the day, or cause them to be physically tired after each shift/day of work.
- My parent(s)/guardian(s) work “shift work” where they are required to arrive at a specific time and have a clear clock-out time (i.e. 7:00am-3:00pm). My parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring work stress home with them, but they do not perform work duties after their shift ends.
- My parent(s)/guardian(s) work jobs where they have a boss, the boss closely manages their work, and their boss clearly defines what work your parent/guardian is required to do.
- My family qualifies for financial governmental assistance, or makes just a little too much to qualify.
- My parent(s)/guardian(s) normally do not have a lot of extra money at the end of the month; they have enough to pay the bills and buy food, but not to save very much, pay for a vacation, or buy new clothes.
- My parent(s)/guardian(s) don't have health insurance. OR, my parent(s)/guardian(s) have health insurance but only see the doctor if it's an emergency.
- My parent(s)/guardian(s) rent their/our home. OR, my parent(s)/guardian(s) have other family members living in their home (i.e. their parent(s)/guardians(s), grandchildren, etc.), OR my parent(s)/guardian(s) own their home, but maintaining it is financially stressful (paying for repairs, paying for new appliances, etc.)

APPENDIX B  
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Contextualization

- Tell me about who lives at home with you, or who you used to live with at home.
- Tell me about your parent(s)/guardian(s). How do you define this?
- Tell me about the type of work your parent(s)/guardian(s) do.
- Tell me about your relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s).
- How would you define your social class growing up? Why?
- Talk to me about conversations you had about going to college before applying/starting.
- Tell me about your understanding of your social class. How would you define it and why? How was it spoken about it in your home? How do you believe it influenced the values you had growing up, or hold today?
- What expectations did you have about college, if any?
- Tell me about your motive(s) for attending college?
  - What are you hoping to do after?
  - How has this goal changed, if at all, since starting college?
- Tell me about your parent(s)/guardian(s) motives for you attending (or not to attend) college, or indifference.

### Apprehending the Phenomenon

- Talk to me about your daily/weekly routine.
  - How are your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved?
- Tell me about conversations you have with your parent(s)/guardian(s) about college now that you've started. These conversations can be about anything: work, food, other family members, school, etc.
- How, if at all, has attending college changed your interactions with your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
- How, if at all, has attending college impacted your relationship with your parent(s)/guardian(s)? What does that impact look like?
- Share with me how you see class influencing your experience on your college campus. How do you see your social class as being valued, or not, on campus?
- How has attending college influenced your values, if at all?
- Where are you completing most of your online/remote learning? Why did you choose that location? What conversations have you had with your parent(s)/guardian(s) about online/remote learning? How do you believe they feel about online/remote learning? How do you feel about online/remote learning?

### Clarifying the Phenomenon

- Talk to me about conversation topics you usually discussed with your parent(s)/guardian(s) before college.
  - What about now?
- How is your parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement in your daily/weekly routine changed, if at all, since starting college?
- How do you think your interactions with your parents today would look different if they had attended college?

- Have you discussed social class related topics with your parent(s)/guardian(s) (including work, money, expectations, etc.) since starting college? What has that been like?

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAILS AND  
EXEMPT INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Hello, MWU Colleagues

I hope this email finds you doing well. My name is Lindsay Mason and I serve as the director of Off-Campus Life. I am also a Ph.D. student at the University of Northern Colorado in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership program. I am in the final stage of the program, the dissertation, and am currently working to recruit student participants for my research study. I am studying undergraduate, working-class, first-generation college students and how middle-class socialization on MWU's campus may impact their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s). I am specifically looking to study students who are in their third year at MWU, or higher, to gain insight from students who have completed at least 2 years of education on MWU's campus (or another 4-year university).

Literature shows that first-generation college students from a working-class background must learn how to navigate not only the increased academic expectations on campus, but also the middle-class social and cultural expectations. The literature shows that the response from students varies, with some internalizing these new middle-class values and some making intentional effort to remain true to their working-class values, and all options in between. Regardless of the student's response, it is usually an unexpected experience that may impact their relationships with their parent(s)/guardian(s).

I am interested in hearing the stories about these relationships, particularly during this unique COVID-19 learning environment (which may have amplified this impact), and share how MWU, and other campuses, can appreciate working-class values, integrate them into our campus, and support these students holistically. I recognize that some MWU departments and colleagues already do great work around this topic, and I hope to impact those who could improve.

If you know any students who may qualify and would be interested in participating in my study, I would appreciate you forwarding the email below.

I appreciate your help.

With thanks,

Lindsay

Hello, MWU Students:

I hope this email finds you doing well. My name is Lindsay Mason and I serve as the director of Off-Campus Life. I am also a Ph.D. student at the University of Northern Colorado in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership program. I am in the final stage of my degree, the dissertation, and am currently working to recruit student participants for my research study. I am studying undergraduate, working-class, first-generation college students and how your

experience at MWU, specifically the middle-class socialization on MWU's campus, may be impacting your relationships with your parent(s)/guardian(s).

Here are more specifics of research participant qualifications. I am looking for students who are:

- Undergraduates (working towards a bachelor's degree)
- At least a third-year at MWU, and have completed at least two years of education either at MWU or another 4-year campus
- First-generation college students. I define this as students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) do not possess a bachelor's degree..
- From a working-class background. Not sure if you identify as working-class? While I won't make the determination for you, here are some questions to consider (link to questions in Appendix B)

If you qualify, and think you may be interested in participating, please read my attached Informed Consent form for more details about my study, what to expect, and its purpose.

If you do not qualify, but know of a peer who may, can you forward them this email?

With thanks,

Lindsay




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### Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research

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**Title of Research Study:** Relationships Between Working-Class, First-Generation College Students and Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s): A Phenomenological Study on the Impacts of Middle-Class Socialization

**Researcher(s):** Lindsay Mason, Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership Ph.D.  
Phone Number: (951) 552-4090      email: maso9421@bears.unco.edu

**Research Advisor:** Dr. Tamara Yakaboski  
Phone Number: (970) 351-1156      email: tamara.yakaboski@unco.edu

**Procedures:** I would like to ask you to participate in a research study I am completing for my Ph.D. through the University of Northern Colorado. I am studying students who identify working-class, first-generation college students and how their college experience may have impacted their relationship with their parent(s)/guardian(s).

My research will include two steps. The first will be a 60-90 minute interview. The interview will take place either via Zoom, or in person with safety precautions in place (6 feet apart, wearing masks). The interview will include questions about your parent(s)/guardian(s), your working-class background, your relationship with your parent(s)/guardian(s), how the relationship has changed since starting college, and how a most remote/online learning environment since COVID-19 has impacted your relationship. The audio of the interviews will be recorded, and visual if via Zoom and if you are comfortable with having your camera on while being recorded. The recordings will only be accessible by me. All interviews will be transcribed, and the transcriptions will be confidential. The recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research project.

The second step will be a written reflection. I will provide you some questions (5-10) a few weeks after the completion of our interview and ask for you to provide written reflections a couple of weeks later. The questions will be similar in nature as the interview. Some of the questions may be exactly the same, and some may be follow-up from the interview. The written reflections will be stored in a password secured google drive, only accessible by me.

There are no direct incentives provided for participating in this study. Nonetheless, I am hopeful that the interview and written reflection process proves to be beneficial for you. Your participation may also benefit current and future working-class, first-generation college students at Mountain West University (and other institutions) as I will be making recommendations at the conclusion of my research about how MWU can better support you and your peers.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me, Lindsay Mason, at maso9421@bears.unco.edu. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

**Voluntary Participation:** Please understand that your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time without penalty. Your chosen level of participation (none, partial, or fully) will not impact your standing at MWU or your ability to access any programs or services.

**Please take your time reading through this document to decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.**

If you decide to participate, please complete the survey linked below. Completion of this qualification survey indicates your consent to the research procedures and moving forward in participating in the research if you qualify, but you may still withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. Please keep this form for your records.

APPENDIX D  
QUALIFICATION SURVEY

Hello, and thank you for your interest in my research study. To determine if you qualify, you must meet the following qualifications. If you qualify, please enter your name and email below so I can follow up with you about participating in the study. If you are unsure if you qualify and would like to discuss your qualifications further, please enter your name and email address and I will follow up. There is no response required if you do not qualify or are not interested in participating in the study.

### **Qualifications**

Qualified students will identify with the following statements:

- I am an undergraduate student at Mountain West University.
- I am in my third, fourth, fifth, or more years of education at MWU.
- I have completed at least two years of higher education at MWU, or another 4-year university campus.
- I am a first-generation college student. My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not possess a bachelor's degree.
- I come from a working-class background.

### **Moving Forward**

1. Do you identify with all statements above? Are you interested in participating in the study?
  - a. Yes, I identify with all statements above and am interested in participating in the study.
    - i. Name and email address
  - b. I am interested in participating in the study but am unsure if I qualify and would like to connect with the researcher to discuss my qualifications further.
    - i. Name and email address
  - c. I do not qualify and/or am not interested in participating.

If you have questions about this study, please email me, Lindsay Mason, at [maso9421@bears.unco.edu](mailto:maso9421@bears.unco.edu).

APPENDIX E  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN COLORADO

**Institutional Review Board**

Date: 01/04/2021

Principal Investigator: Lindsay Mason

Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**

Action Date: 01/04/2021

Protocol Number: [2010013892](#)

Protocol Title: Relationships Between Working-Class, First-Generation College Students and Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s): A Phenomenological Study on the Impacts of Middle-Class Socialization

Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

**As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:**

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).
- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. \*You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/>.

Sincerely,



Nicole Morse  
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784



APPENDIX F

JOURNAL OF FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT  
SUCCESS MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION  
GUIDELINES

## Journal of First-generation Student Success Submission Guidelines

The *Journal of First-generation Student Success* seeks to publish practice articles that are grounded in research and literature and, reciprocally, research articles that speak to practice. The editors seek to review manuscripts and publish articles that are innovative, imaginative, and forward thinking regarding the experiences and outcomes of first-generation college students and the approaches institutions of higher education are employing to serve, matriculate, and complete this population. Through the deep intersectionality of the first-generation identity, the large presence of first-generation students at institutions, and the necessary engagement of both the academic and student services areas for success, this journal offers many opportunities for cross disciplinary collaboration.

While traditional scholarship will be encouraged and accepted, articles that prioritize innovative solutions and advanced thought that disputes deficit-based conversations and propel an asset-based, evidence-driven national narrative, are welcome. Especially encouraged are manuscripts that blend conventional and unconventional scholarly approaches that challenge the traditional paradigm of research methods, analyses, and presentation of data. The journal will consider scholarship that disrupts the traditional first-generation success dialogue, prioritizes the removal of systemic higher education and institutional barriers to success, and encourages topics that encourage cross-community and cross institutional collaborations for sustained change.

The Journal of First-generation Student Success will feature the following areas of interest:

**First-generation Identity and Intersectionality:** Manuscripts submitted for review in this area may include qualitative and quantitative manuscripts that consider advanced thought through the lenses of theory, research, and/or practice. The manuscripts should be methodologically sound with a clearly defined section detailing how the research relates to approaches institutions are using to define the first-generation identity, how students are exploring their own identity within the college context, how intersectionality with other identities and systems of oppression shape both the student experience, and how institutions use identity to choose how to serve first-generation students. Priority will be given to submissions where findings can be used in the practice of administrators at all levels, faculty, and students. The manuscripts should provide deep insight into the complexities of the first generation identity, advance a new narrative which differs from ones where intersectional identities are conflated, and illuminates how student identity development shapes college-going decision-making, experiences, and outcomes. Literature reviews and essays that connect current issues with practice, propose creative models for advancing first-generation student outcomes, or discuss innovative uses of theory are welcome.

**Innovative & Evidence-based Practice:** Manuscripts submitted for review in this area may include qualitative and quantitative manuscripts that clearly provide a theory-research-practice connection. The manuscripts should be methodologically sound with a clearly defined practice section in which the author(s) share how the research presents innovative approaches to practice that result in strengthened first-generation identity development, scales offerings to larger

numbers of students, and chronicles how specific practices tailored to the first-generation identity result in the persistence, completion, or specific academic or co-curricular success outcomes. Evidence of innovation must go beyond simple measures of satisfaction and, instead, illuminate effectiveness and usefulness. Manuscripts should clearly present how the findings can be used in the practice of administrators, faculty, and students. The manuscripts should clearly consider first-generation college students, with care given to the intersection of other identities, as well as the role institutional characteristics (e.g., size, type, geography, selectivity, mission) in advancing practice. Literature reviews and essays that connect current issues with practice, propose creative models for advancing first generation student outcomes, or discuss innovative uses of theory will be accepted.

**Demonstrated Advances in Student Outcomes:** Manuscripts submitted for review in this area of emphasis should present theory originating or supported research with demonstrated evidence of effective practices that advance first-generation student outcomes. While definitions of success vary, understanding needs, developing processes, and advancing outcomes in the areas of belonging, academic performance, co-curricular engagement, help seeking behaviors, time to degree, internship and career placement, persistence, and completion will take priority. The manuscripts should be methodologically sound with a clearly defined section detailing how the research may be translated to other settings and replicated. Manuscripts should detail how identities that intersect with first-generation, the institutional context, and specific academic disciplines or co-curricular experiences shaped that advancement of outcomes. Connections to and implications for how these practices, and resulting improved outcomes, shape institutional needs assessments, priorities, policies, and procedures. We encourage manuscripts with innovation, creativity, and bold thought that challenge readers beyond the current typical offerings for advancing first generation efforts.

### **Audience**

The NASPA membership represents a broad constituency of entry-level, intermediate-level, and senior-level professionals who are practitioners, scholars, policy makers, faculty, and executive leaders, among others. These educators have responsibility for a wide variety of institutional responsibilities. JFGSS seeks to publish articles that speak to student affairs educators across this broad range of levels and experiences. While the Co-Editors recognize that published articles must be relevant and useful to practitioners, JFGSS also serves faculty, researchers, scholars, and academic leaders. Not all articles will speak to all constituencies all the time. But the Co-Editors are committed to publishing an array of articles that, at some point, will speak to all educators who work in both the academic and student affairs areas of higher education.

### **Types of Manuscripts**

The NASPA membership represents a broad constituency of entry-level, intermediate-level, and senior-level professionals who are practitioners, scholars, policy makers, faculty, and executive leaders, among others. These educators have responsibility for a wide variety of institutional responsibilities. JFGSS seeks to

publish articles that speak to student affairs educators across this broad range of levels and experiences. While the Co-Editors recognize that published articles must be relevant and useful

to practitioners, JFGSS also serves faculty, researchers, scholars, and academic leaders. Not all articles will speak to all constituencies all the time. But the Co-Editors are committed to publishing an array of articles that, at some point, will speak to all educators who work in both the academic and student affairs areas of higher education.

**Theoretical Manuscripts** are papers in which the "authors draw on existing research literature to advance theory" (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 10) in relation to first-generation student success. Similar in structure and form to review manuscripts (see below), theoretical manuscripts are different in that they rarely present data or findings. Theoretical manuscripts may be a review and critiques of existing theories or research findings; extension of existing literature; theoretical critique of practice; or innovative and forward-thinking expositions of current or future state(s) of student affairs and higher education as applicable to first generation students.

**Review Manuscripts** "are critical evaluations of material that has already been published" (APA, 2001, p. 9). These manuscripts can be meta-analyses of qualitative or quantitative research, policy analysis, or compilations of existing theories or models in first-generation student success practice. Review manuscripts often include a) issue being considered, b) summary of previous research and literature, c) identification of relationships, "contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies" (p. 7), and d) implications for practice, policy, and next steps. Review manuscripts speak to practice with a first-generation student focus.

**Empirical Research Articles** are "reports of original research" (APA, 2010, p. 10). The standard form for empirical research articles is introduction, method, results, and discussion but authors may adapt that form to fit the parameters of their research method. Empirical research manuscripts submitted to JFGSS can include both qualitative and quantitative, ethnography, grounded theory, mixed method, narrative inquiry, and critical inquiry. They must stress the link between research and practice. Several ways authors can achieve this is by addressing the underlying issues or problem related to practice centering on first-generation students that inspired the research; reveal the methodology (i.e., name and describe the specific methodology used) and discuss its relevance to the first-generation student success field; and/or offer a full discussion of results, implications, and conclusions that relates to practice in student affairs and higher education with a first-generation student lens. Empirical articles include case studies, methodological and theory driven research.

**Notes from the Field** provides an opportunity for practitioners and emerging scholars to share their insights from the context in which they work, and to reflect critically on their own practice in an academic space where their voices may be considered underrepresented. Notes include shorter, practitioner-focused articles (5,000 words maximum), discussion papers, reflections on personal experience in the field, presentation of new data, theoretical models or concepts, or reflections on trending developments that have implications for the first-generation student experience. As with our articles, 'Notes from the Field' are peer-reviewed and need to meet the same writing and referencing standards as articles.

*\*See the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2019), 7th edition, for further discussion of these manuscript types.*

## **The Editorial Review Process and Criteria**

Manuscripts under review by *JFGSS* should not be under consideration by other journals.

This publication will use a closed review process; this language reflects a shift to employ inclusive language rather than move away from the industry term “blind review.” Any identification of authorship must be removed prior to submitting the manuscript. To assure closed review, *all* identifiers must be removed: names on the cover page, identification embedded in the electronic document properties, references to institutional affiliations, and citations that identify some or all of the authors. The cover page must include only the title of the manuscript. Manuscripts with obvious and/or subtle identifiers will be returned to the author for redaction prior to beginning the review process.

**Review criteria:** Manuscripts will be reviewed by up to three *JFGSS* Editorial Board members. The criteria all relate to the higher education field, with an emphasis on first-generation topics and success, and include:

- Exceptional, creative, and relevant application to the wide range of thinking, practices, and perspectives in higher education;
- Thorough and sound discussion of the practice, theory, issue, policy, and/or topic;
- Inclusion of far reaching, relevant, and insightful implications and breakthroughs that go beyond the relevance of the institution(s) under study;
- Regarding research manuscript should include:
  - accurate and appropriate description of the methodology,
  - method aligned with and suitable for the focus of the study
  - findings clearly and skillfully communicated
  - implications for practice and/or theory clearly communicated, and ○ quality measures obviously indicated and discussed;
- Evidence of high-quality, readable, and rigorous writing (e.g., coherent, cohesive, cogent);
- Presence of practice implications in theoretical or research-based manuscripts and theoretical implications in practice-based manuscripts;
- Rigorous treatment of the ways the theory, research, and/or practice under discussion can make a difference in the field;
- Presence of a timely, significant, and appropriate topic;
- Evidence of a profound and meaningful level of analysis (theoretical or practical) addressing the concerns, interests, and needs of higher education professionals;
- Apparent contribution to current knowledge, literature, scholarship, theory, and practice; and
- Research, theory, or practice findings connected to larger areas of concern (e.g., policy, decision making, leadership, identity development, innovative practice).

## Technical Requirements

Manuscripts must be submitted in .doc or .docx format.

- **Length:** No more than 5000 words (Notes from the Field), 8000 words (all other article types) maximum, inclusive cover page, tables, figure captions, references, appendices, and all materials. The length of manuscripts is limited to 8000 words because the editors are committed to increasing the accessibility of the journal to a wide range of authors. The number of words and pages the Journal can publish are limited by a number of factors related to cost and publication limits. Longer articles decrease the accessibility of the journal to as wide a range of authors as possible.
- **Format:** American Psychological Association Style, 7th Edition.
- **Spacing and Fonts:** Double-spaced, including references, block quotes, tables, and figures, consistently applied throughout the manuscript. Standard 12-point font throughout.
- **Abstract:** 100 words or less
- **Qualitative Manuscripts:** Positionality statement which locate authors within systems of equity and inclusion.
- **Figures:** All figures, tables, and charts must be submitted as a PDF document or EPS or uncompressed Tiff (600 dpi) file in black and white or grey tones. • Language: English or with translations to English included. Writing free of prejudiced, biased or disrespectful language.
- **Voice:** Active voice and research findings reported in past tense.
- **Professional Preparation:** Manuscripts exceeding the length limits or requiring additional proofreading, formatting, and/or reference checks will be returned to the author(s) for further editing.
- **Submission:** All manuscripts must be submitted through [http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/naspa\\_jfgss](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/naspa_jfgss)

## Editorial Review Process

1. Upon receipt, the Editorial Assistant will briefly review the manuscript to ensure that it meets the above minimum requirements.
2. A unique number will be assigned to the manuscript to enable the closed review process. Editorial Board members are also assigned a number to assure the integrity of the closed review process.
3. Manuscript submission and revising, communication, and the review process are conducted online through the *JFGSS* website. When the manuscript is received, an automatically generated acknowledgement email is sent to the first author. It is the first author's responsibility to forward these communications to other authors.
4. The manuscript is assigned for review based on areas of professional and research expertise. The first review is expected to be completed in four weeks but may take longer.
5. Editorial board members complete their reviews online. Upon completion, these reviews are available through the *JFGSS* website for authors to access.
6. At the completion of the review, each reviewer makes one of the following

recommendations: Not to Accept, Major Revisions Required, Accept Pending Minor Revisions, or Accept. The Co-Editors and/or appropriate Associate Editor examine the reviews and render a final decision. The first author is sent an email outlining that decision with links to a decision letter from the co-Editors and instructions on how to access the reviews.

- *Not to Accept/Not Accepted After Initial Review:* The manuscript does not meet one or more of the criteria in regard to the scope and direction for publication in *JFGSS*.
  - *Major Revisions Required:* The manuscript has potential for publication, but must be revised before publication can be considered. The author is to address the editorial comments and make appropriate changes within one month. Authors will submit a revised draft for a second round of editorial review. The second review is expected to be completed in 6 weeks but may take longer. The resubmission and second review does not guarantee acceptance. A third revision is often required.
    - *Accept Pending Minor Revisions:* The manuscript is considered worthy of publication pending the successful completion of minor revisions. Authors are requested to make the revisions and return the revised manuscript within one month. The Editorial Assistant and Executive Editor review the final manuscript submitted to ensure that the suggestions have been appropriately addressed.
  - *Accept:* The manuscript is considered appropriate and timely for *JFGSS*. An email is sent to the author confirming its acceptance.
7. After a revision from the author is accepted, the final manuscript is forwarded to a Copy Editor who edits the manuscript. The Copy Editor will contact the author, when necessary, about changes.
  8. The Co-Editors work with the authors and publisher to compile the issue.

*JFGSS* is available online three times each calendar year, and is included with NASPA membership.

Exceptions to any of the above instructions should be discussed with the [Co Editors](#) prior to submission. Questions about the submission and review process can be directed to the [Editorial Assistant](#).

APPENDIX G

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH  
PROGRESS



Date(s)	Activity	Notes
December 10	Dissertation Proposal defense	
December 14	IRB submission	
January 25	IRB approval	
January 26	Start participant recruitment	Send emails to MWU colleagues, snowball sampling procedures
February 15	Start collecting data	Start interviews, plan to send reflection questions 2 weeks after the participant's interview. Give participant 2 weeks to return written reflections.
March 15	Start analyzing data	Data analysis will overlap with data collection. I will purposefully wait to complete a few interviews before analyzing data.
May 7	Data collection is complete	
June 28	Complete data analysis and begin writing manuscripts	
August 16	Complete two written manuscripts	
September	Submit dissertation beginning of month and defend end of month	

APPENDIX H  
ACTUAL TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH  
PROGRESS

Date(s)	Activity	Notes
December 10	Dissertation Proposal defense	
Late December	IRB submission	
January 4	IRB approval	
February 1	Started participant recruitment	Send emails to MWU colleagues, snowball sampling procedures
February 13	Started collecting data	
April 4	Completed data collection	
April-May	Preliminary data analysis	Presented as a part of an MSU Research Dialogue series on my <i>preliminary</i> findings
June-July	Data analysis	
September-October	Completed two written, draft manuscripts	
October 18	Submit dissertation	
November 1	Defend dissertation	Scheduled
November	Complete committee and graduate school edits*	*Assuming I pass my defense
December 10	Enjoy graduation ceremony**	**Assuming I pass my defense and satisfactorily complete all committee and graduate school edits
February 2022	Revisit manuscripts for publication	