

‘Walking in-between’: Narratives of Negotiating Differing Class Cultures in Australia

Submitted by

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Summary

This thesis examines how ‘upwardly mobile’ Australians negotiate differences between working-class backgrounds and their current middle-class lives. The concepts of cultural capital and habitus, important elements of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social practice, are used to analyse the cultural processes implicit in the narratives recounted during interviews in a small qualitative study in Melbourne, Australia. Bourdieu’s theoretical understandings of social practice are used in other social analyses to explain the reproduction of patterns of social class. A primary point of interest found in these studies is how socio-economic potentials and constraints and cultural patterns interact and impact peoples’ life chances. This thesis follows this tradition of cultural analysis, but takes a different approach by turning attention to how class processes may also involve resistance to and disruption of the social reproduction of class. Emphasis is placed here on the patterns of thinking, social practice, and emotions of people who have experienced upward social class mobility. Their life narratives offer insight into the cultural processes embedded in socio-economic practices and circumstances.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the work of my own hands but it simply would not exist without the influence of several dear family, friends, and mentors.

The interviewees entrusted me with their life stories. I am humbled and deeply grateful – humbled in the hope they find this representation true to their experiences, and deeply grateful to be able to use their stories.

The project has its origins in Beau Weston’s seminar, *Social Class*. Beau’s influence as a mentor and friend has seen me through more than one ‘crisis of confidence’.

I took leave for two years in the middle of my bachelor’s degree to learn something ‘practical’. Mathew Haverkamp, skilled craftsman and dear friend, taught me carpentry. He also taught me that building well and thinking well are synonymous.

There are two particular friends, Rob and Senem, with whom I have had countless conversations about this research – especially as it relates to their lives and my own. Their thoughts, their life narratives, and their influence are materials which went into the building of this thesis.

Without the professional and patient guidance and encouragement of my supervisors, Kerreen Reiger and Anthony Moran, I would likely still be looking at piles of materials, perplexed and wondering how to put it together. They both treated my project like it was their own work. I mention this here because I know that such careful, prompt, and attentive supervision ought not to be taken for granted. Kerreen and Anthony watched me start with gusto, then flounder with doubt, and then finish strong. And they had much to do with the strong finish.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my mother, Valerie. I have so much to thank her for. I will start by thanking her for reading to me as a child. My intellectual journey began on those afternoons as I followed my mother’s voice, imagining the narratives as she read, and delighting in her ability to give dramatic and often hilarious voices to the characters. In many ways, she gave me my start.

September 2010

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics or Safety Committee or authorised officer as appropriate.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Introduction

This work is a rendering of the life stories of a small group of Australian women and men from working-class backgrounds, leading middle-class adult lives. The thesis is based on in-depth interviews conducted in Melbourne in 2008 and 2009. The foremost aim of this thesis is to examine their lives – their voices – that in the telling we would discover the subtle ways they negotiate life betwixt differing class-cultures. These women and men spoke with me at length about their experiences with family, in school, and work. They disclosed remarkable narratives of, among other things, private tragedy, resigned effort, cold loss, and personal triumphs. Class mobility may bring ill-fate as much as it entails good fortune. This is a study of the biographical complexity found in the lives of those called ‘upwardly mobile’. Class is the domain of the socio-economic, but it is embodied and enacted in the myriad practices of the mundane, in culture. Biography arrests our attention because, as story, it embodies meaning in its detail, in its structure, and in the voice of the story-teller. Using biographical accounts of upward mobility, this thesis examines the ways people negotiate *class-cultural* processes of meaning-making in identity, social practices, and social relations.

Class research is largely about social inequality. This thesis follows that tradition, and is concerned with social inclusion and exclusion – at times overtly and often implicitly. Something important needs to be addressed from the outset. There is doubt, both in the social sciences and in public discourse, as to whether social class is a relevant identifier and or explicator of late-modern social life (Bauman 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1991). Does ‘class consciousness’ bear any weight of consequence in the lives of Melbournians in the early 21st Century? This thesis argues ‘yes’, so I am obliged to offer some justification. Chapter one examines some of the debates surrounding this question, as a way of situating this research amongst other work on class. However, the reader is invited to draw their own conclusions based on the merits of the presentation and analysis of these biographical accounts of family, education, and work. This is, after all, about them. The work is

premised on the idea that class – and what may be called *classed* consciousness – is embodied and enacted in social practice (Devine and Savage 2000). Therefore, special attention is paid to the classic interest of class – social inclusion and exclusion – as it manifests in the interviewees’ stories. I approach the *general* of class dynamics, through the *particular* of real lives.

Here is a familiar life-plot structure of a capitalist ‘success-story’: Grow up in a working-class family, be the first in the family to graduate from university, and become a ‘professional’. Such is the trajectory of the interviewees. *Success* and *achievement* are words which can easily be attributed to their lives. However, the interviewees’ stories are painfully more complex. *Success* was not the only way they conceptualised their past. If their stories tell us anything, it is that we are not yet aware of all there is to know about the experience of social mobility. Listen to the words of Carolyn Leste in *This Fine Place So Far From Home: Voices of Academics from the Working-Class*: ‘In my trajectory from working-class family of origin to the threshold of middle-class professional status, I have suffered a loss my present context doesn’t even recognise as a loss’ (Dews and Law 1995, p. 1). Class mobility is a form of *social migration* and involves many of the complexities of making large moves across social space. In *The Weight of the World*, Pierre Bourdieu writes, regarding social mobility:

Of all the drama and conflicts, both internal and external and tied as much to upward as to downward mobility, that are produced by the contradictions of succession, the most unexpected is no doubt the feeling of *being torn* that comes from experiencing success as failure or, better still, as transgression (1999, p. 510).

Class mobility means embodying class-to-class relations within families, communities, and within the self. Movement across social class space – emotionally/psychologically and physically – is about becoming something new, a social chemistry of the past and present. It will become apparent to the reader that the interviewees do not start as one thing (working class) and simply become something else (middle class). They inhabit and resist both class-cultures, in differing ways, throughout their lives. For this reason, *class mobility* is conceptualised in this work as

class movement. Life, for these people, is a continual resynthesising of relation to the self, to other people, and of circumstances, all in regards to social class. The two terms, *mobility* and *movement* are used interchangeably in this thesis, though the notion of perpetual *movement* is what is implied by both.

Why use biography? While theorisation of social class is helpful, it is abstract. The premise of this work is that class is *enacted* in social practice. These autobiographical accounts are the qualitative material necessary to help plant our understandings of these class processes on the ground, where the social action is. While these are only a small number of biographical accounts of class mobility, they are enough to raise important questions and to answer one important one: how did *these* people negotiate life betwixt social classes. One must have, according to Devine and Savage (2000, p. 196), ‘an understanding of the mutual constitution of the economic and the social’ in order to grasp how class works. The detailed and nuanced life-stories recounted here give real breath and flesh to otherwise ephemeral social processes. ‘A story,’ wrote novelist, Flannery O’Connor, ‘is a way to say something that can’t be said any other way’ (1972, p. 96). Research on class mobility needs life-story, and there is a shortage of such accounts (as will be further discussed in chapter one). The voices must be heard to understand lives which move in social space, the way men and women embody class, and the ways they enact class. Biography takes its place in this thesis as concrete illustration of class, where it counts: in the ways that everyday people live and move and have their being.

I conducted the interviews face-to-face, intent on seeing and hearing the story-tellers recall and recount their stories. Each interview is an engaging and vivid artefact, with unique detail as well as social context. The interviewees are strikingly self-aware and self-reflexive about the greater social structures which influenced the course of their lives. Their accounts demonstrate the ways people both shape and are shaped by their social environments. Class is often viewed as a self-perpetuating structural force in capitalist societies. This thesis argues that, while that theory is valid, individual negotiations of class structures require closer inspection. People not only succumb to and reproduce social structures, they also resist them. As anthropologist, Michael Jackson writes, ‘A person’s life does more than conserve and perpetuate [their] pre-existing circumstances; it interprets them, nuances and negotiates them, re-imagines

them, protests against them, and endures them....' (1996, p. 30). The focus of this thesis is on how their lives unfold, as they *negotiate* and *re-imagine* them in the course of living, and in the telling of their stories during the interviews.

These biographies speak to us, and say things about class that, in O'Connor's words, *can't be said any other way*. Theory alone is not enough. Carolyn Steedman, in her book *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (1986), gives an account of her and her mother's experiences as English working-class. Steedman concludes that '...the structures of class analysis and schools of cultural criticism [...] cannot deal with everything there is to say about my mother's life' (1986, p. 6). Similarly, theory informs this thesis, (especially Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice), and the narratives 'speak' to the theory, but the theory alone cannot speak for their narratives. The usefulness of these biographies is in the way they challenge accepted notions of the reproduction of social class, as well as class mobility. Their tones, their words, and their perceptions of memory make meaning for their lives.

The facts of their experiences are important, as are their stories. However, perhaps the truly vital thing to be found in the following pages, the thing which the reader is encouraged to attune their ear to, are the voices – the immaterial breath of character which illumines the story and detail. My task as researcher and writer is to try to, as much as possible, render their voices to be heard by the attentive reader. As with Steedman's work, this rendering of narratives is about 'interpretations', the ways people 'rework what has already happened to give events meaning' (1986, p. 5). Meaning is what we are after.

I confide in the reader that, in the course of this research, I grappled with significant doubt. Perhaps I am not the first, nor the last research student to worry: 'Do I have anything to say?' What I meant in those internal conversations was, 'Do I have anything to say beyond what the interview transcripts already say, within themselves?' The answer – 'yes' – became apparent to me as I brought the eleven voices together. It was then that I heard what their lives had to say to each other. As an experience for me, the researcher, it was like inviting eleven people with similar yet varied experiences into a living room together and observing as they said to one another, 'Yes, I know what it is like'. As the chapters developed, the cacophony of

their voices evolved into a unique harmony of class-mobility experience. The meanings from each life coalesced with the others, resulting in the emergence of some greater significance – at times surprising, and doubtless, important. My anxieties were put to rest.

‘There’s not a big difference between classes in this country’, said Jesse, a 20-something year old Melbournian. I met Jesse and his girlfriend, Rae, on the 86-tram one February afternoon. I had arrived in Melbourne for research only three weeks prior to this and was becoming acquainted with the city. I already felt the tram air-conditioning drying beads of sweat on my forehead as I sat down and ended my mobile phone conversation. Sitting across from me, Jesse and Rae noticed my accent and Jesse grinned and said, ‘Where’re you from, mate?’ I told them I had only been in Australia for a few weeks, from Nashville. ‘Cool’, said Rae, ‘country music’. Rae adjusted her shirt and they both took off their fashionable sunglasses. They wore tight fitting jeans, white t-shirts, and Converse sneakers. I discovered they were a couple, living in the city and both working in the food industry as servers. They were several years out of secondary school. Rae was petite and had dreadlocks in her hair. She spoke slowly and thoughtfully. Jesse was tall and lean, friendly, and a lively conversationalist. Rae asked me what my research was about. I said ‘Class mobility’. Jesse made a knowing and friendly grin and said, ‘There’s not a big difference between classes in this country’. He added, ‘This country is so young, we haven’t had that type of division form yet’. I took interest but did not debate him on the point. The conversation eventually turned elsewhere. They said they had just come from a squash gym but were turned away, not allowed to enter and play because they had not been dressed correctly – ‘Like all the pricks in there in white shorts and clean tennies,’ said Jesse.

Class, again, is about cultural practice, and inclusion and exclusion.

I recount this story here to re-emphasise the aim of this thesis, as well as what it does *not* propose to do. The presentation of these few life narratives in the following pages examines how these people negotiated class processes. It is primarily concerned with inclusion and exclusion, as is the short story of Jesse and Rae. A few lives are not, however, presumed to speak for all life experiences of class mobility. The ambitions

of the thesis are best thought of as humble: a small study of class subjectivities, specifically related to class mobility. This is not a treatise on the nature of the Australian class system. This is not an examination of the origins or the future of class or class mobility in Australia. Particular academic discourses of class influence this thesis – a theoretical landscape in which I am working – but they are not the primary focus. While this is not a grand-sweeping examination of the Australian class system, it is hoped that a broadened understanding of *class movement* may be gained by seeing how these eleven people negotiated the class processes at work in their lives.

I came to this project through my own experience of being an outsider at a small, private university in the United States. I grew up in a family that was, as are many families, neither distinctly working-class nor obviously middle-class. I spent the first two years at university feeling sincerely that the admissions office had made a mistake and sooner than later I would be found out – an unpolished young man feigning confidence, trying to pass for a prestige-university student. By my third year, the anxieties finally abated (though, they never disappeared entirely). The fourth year as an undergraduate, I read three books which gave me words and recognition for what I was experiencing: Paul Fussel's *Class: a guide through the American Status System*, Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*, and American journalist, Alfred Lubrano's book, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Background*. Reading *Limbo* was a quiet epiphany, as though someone had secretly written my story and I happened upon it accidentally. Alfred Lubrano is a journalist and a self-proclaimed class 'straddler'. He had, in his words, 'a street brawler's temperament' with an 'Ivy League circuit breaker to keep things in check' (Lubrano 2004, p. 8). Lubrano opens *Limbo* with this:

I am two people.

I now live a middle-class life, working at a white-collar newspaper-man's job, but I was born blue collar. I've never quite reconciled the dichotomy. This book is a step toward understanding what people gain and what they leave behind as they move from the working class to the middle class (Lubrano 2004, p. 1).

My personal narrative of class situates me similarly to the interviewees in this thesis: in the ambivalent, often mysterious, flux between class cultures. From this nebulous position, I offer this thesis as another ‘*step toward understanding what people gain and what they leave behind*’ – people like me, and people like the eleven Australians the reader will meet in the accounts which follow.

The work which follows is meant to offer another angle of perspective on the subject of class mobility, and it is situated in particular proximity to other class research. The first chapter, *Class Mobility Perspectives*, consists of a review of some relevant theoretical traditions of class, including debates about the culture of class, especially class mobility. Chapter one also describes the primary theoretical perspectives and concepts which inform the thesis analysis, as well as a discussion of methodology used in the research. The subjects of the subsequent chapters follow the narrative life-course of the interviewees. Chapter two, *Negotiating Family*, examines the early habitus formation in working-class family life; both the legacy and the disinheritance of class. It demonstrates one of the more surprising findings of the thesis: ways that the *disruption of habitus* was negotiated in the family, long before entering middle-class institutions like university. *Negotiating Education*, chapter three, looks at the emotional and practical complexities of their navigations of higher education. Working-class backgrounds lead to disjuncture in identity, relationships, and circumstances. The chapter examines how the interviewees self-reflexively face the excitement and pain of incongruent class cultures at university. Chapter four, *Negotiating Work*, examines the ways the interviewees both *become* middle-class and *remain* working-class in their adult work and family lives. The chapter looks at their stories of work, as they, at times, fit in, and other times experience themselves as outsiders in the work-place. The final chapter concludes this study of lives of class mobility with a discussion of *habitus hybridity*. It examines the question: are the interviewees able to reconcile differing class identities, and how?

This work may be thought of, in part, as a meditation on *reconciliation*. What the reader will find, as I, the researcher found, are lives marked by the need to reconcile ambivalences and disruption to the continuity of identities and social relations. This is surely a theme of any good story. This story, though – this thesis – is distinctly the story of the reconciliation of *class*. Movement between the cultures of class may

entail the dramatic elements of one world approaching another; a stranger in a strange place; a migrant engaging with new mannerisms, tastes, and noticeably speaking in a second language. The thesis asks the question: Have the interviewees managed to reconcile differing classed identities and relationships? And at what cost, and to what gain? The reader is invited to hold these questions in mind, and to listen for the answers in the voices of these stories of Australians.

Class Culture and Class Mobility Perspectives

This chapter prepares the way, or sets the stage, for life stories which have much to say about class movement. Herein the reader will find a brief tracing of class theoretical traditions, detail of the theoretical positions taken in this thesis, and a description of the methodology used in the research. The first section – *tracing theoretical traditions* – is concise – meant to introduce the dominant themes and debates on *class consciousness, status, social relations, potentials and constraints*, and how these ideas have been debated in the Australian context. The second section – *class as culture* – traces important developments in the Marxian and Weberian tradition which considered the ways class and culture intersect and interact. This includes discussion of the ways *dignity* and *recognition* are implicated in class patterns. The section also explores the ways contemporary class analysis has responded to late-modernist critiques of the validity of class analysis. The third chapter section – *theoretical positions* – details particular theoretical concepts which directly inform the analysis in this thesis, including: *habitus, cultural capital, dignity* and *hidden injuries of class*, and *self-reflexivity*. The fourth section – *methodology* – describes the particular strategies, procedures, and motivations entailed in the qualitative, in-depth interview based research of this thesis. The chapter aims to contextualise the life stories as social research, employing brevity to guide the reader swiftly to the autobiographical accounts which give the thesis its breath.

Before proceeding further, the reader is invited to meditate on a poem by Seamus Heaney titled, *Digging*. The piece is, in part, about the author's relationship to his father, about generational inheritance of disposition, and about work. Preceding a review of literature is an unusual place for poetry. This is deliberate, that the reader would have these themes – family, inheritance, work, and change – in mind as they examine the theory which is meant to offer coherence or at least understanding to real lives. Read this for the themes, the voice, and the meaning. Read the poem for enjoyment, and it will be revisited in the concluding chapter of the thesis:

Digging

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; as snug as a gun.

Under my window a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade,
Just like his old man.

My grandfather could cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, digging down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

- Seamus Heaney (1996, p. 1788-1789)

Tracing Class Theoretical Traditions

The concept of class arose as explication of the structure of capitalist society. Karl Marx premised that an individual position in society is one of greater or lesser power-

the dominant and the dominated – based on one’s relationship to ‘the means of production’, or, one’s ownership of, or lack of, property (Marx 2000). In Marx’s analysis, social groupings – classes – are determined by the material conditions of capitalism, in which some people own property and some do not. Those who own productive property (the bourgeoisie) have a power relationship of domination over those who do not own productive property (the proletariat). These class groups, of owners and workers become defined by ‘a common situation, common interests’ (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 52). The emphasis in this type of class analysis is on the exploitative nature of economic relations between individuals and groups. The class hierarchy is one of continual conflicting economic interest, in which the dominant classes act to keep the dominated classes in a subservient status. The *material determinism* is seen in Marx’s notion of *class consciousness*. A *class consciousness* forms amongst those groups, as the ‘production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and material intercourse of men...’ (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 42).

Critiques of Marx’s class analysis suggested its inability to account for the historical change and complexity of modern capitalism, and this is, as Connell and Irving suggest (1980) a shortcoming of Marx’s conceptualisation of class structure. Max Weber argued that market capacity, or the marketable skills of workers, influence life chances (Weber 1963). The notion of *market capacity*, argued Weber, is a concept more accurately suited to analysing the complexity of the capitalist structure than simply assuming the homogenous class groups suggested by Marx. Weber suggested that social *status* – social honour or prestige – is equally as important as one’s relation to economic ownership in the determination of social positioning. Status groups have a shared sense of social identity, including affinity to tastes and practices, in which case, social identification is not necessarily as focused in terms of a *class consciousness*.

This entails processes of socially excluding those of different social groups. Weber does not discount the importance of socio-economic position, but emphasises that is not the only determinant of status. Weber uses the term social class to emphasise the links between the culture of occupationally based status groups (again, market position over simply relation to the mode of production) and their material, economic

origin and position. Gender, race, and age are examples in which patterns of status would not coincide directly with class positioning. Weber emphasised that class groupings coalesce when a similar economic grouping also shares a common sense of identity. For Weber, this happens around similar market positions or occupational groupings, namely a working class, a middle class of professionals, managers, and technicians, and an upper class of owners. In a similar expansion of the defining factors of class, sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf suggested that 'post-capitalist' western capitalist societies like the United States and Britain exhibited conflict based on authority and power rather than strictly on ownership (Dahrendorf 1959).

The *functionalist* theoretical tradition differed greatly from Marxian and Weberian explanations of capitalist class systems. Most commonly associated with the work of sociologist Talcott Parsons, functionalist thought assumes that inequality is a regular or normal part of a well functioning social system. Functionalist thought asserts that the dominant roles in society are filled by those with the right qualifications and *natural* abilities and attributes. The widespread acceptance of this system, namely meritocracy, or a credentials based social hierarchy, is seen as important for maintaining social order. Functionalist theory asks how stratification works to maintain overall cohesion of the society (Parsons 1985). These ideas support the notion of meritocracy, or rule by merit, where the talented are in positions of power by a sort of social, individual natural selection (McNamee and Miller 2004).

Marx's influence on the theorisation of class continued on into the 20th Century. An example is sociologist, Erik Olin Wright, whose class research began in the 1960s and continues through to today. His work has focused on class in America as well as internationally, most famously through an empirical project called the *Comparative Project of Class Structure and Class Consciousness* (Wright 1989). Wright maintains an emphasis on class as a social relation to the economic means of production, but more specifically states that class is based on 'the unequal distribution of rights and powers over productive resources' (Habibis and Walter 2009). According to Wright's analysis, class relations are exploitative because the profits of the owners benefit them to the detriment of lower classes (Wright 1997). Wright has argued that status-based theorisations of class identity (Weberian accounts) do not account for the fact that

class relations (of inequality in ownership of productive resources) cut across occupational patterns (Wright 1985).

Status-based theorisation equally influenced later class theorisation. An important example is the work of British sociologist, John Goldthorpe, whose research focus was on market relations, or situations, and the life chances they produce (1969). This approach pointed to the significance of the aggregate factors related to employment which constitute life chances, including things such as income and employment conditions. Following Weber's emphasis on status, occupational status has been viewed as the greatest social stratifying force by Goldthorpe and other social class theorists (Goldthorpe et al. 1969).

In the Australian context, both Marxian and Weberian class models have been used to describe the socio-economic landscape. Wright's class scheme was taken up by Australian sociologist Mark Western to account for the Australian class landscape (Western 1991). The model of status-based stratification has been used by some Australian sociologists, such as Baxter et al. (1991) in attempts at charting the class situation in Australia. However, in their historical study of social class in Australia, Connell and Irving (1980) conceptualise class as historically developed power relations, not immutable forms of social stratification. Class seen as stratification, suggest Connell and Irving, is ahistorical; it can only decipher an image the class situation at a particular moment and cannot account for the particular social contexts which shaped that overall class picture. Class analysis, argue Connell and Irving, is about social power and the organising effect it has on society, on everyday life. In this way, class is historically developed and 'situational' (particular to time and place) as it consists not just in who has power, but in how power was garnered.

Connell's work on social class is important to the Australian context, as well as an example of further development in Marxian theorisation of class. Connell's *Making the Difference* (Connell 1982) employs a relational-patterns analysis, combining inquiry into processes of class and gender in schooling. She expands the notion of relational patterns by researching how patterns of class interact with patterns of gender at home and in the school system, and how these patterns influence each other. These social, relational arrangements mean that there are particular ranges of

opportunity available to the different class groupings. Connell writes, ‘...we need to think in terms of the *potentials* that a given situation has for the people in it, and the *constraints* on what they can do with it’ (1982, p. 193). The choices people have, given the potentials and constraints of their material circumstances, are open to the innovations of individual choice and action. Potentials and constraints are largely shaped by the history of the patterns of social relations, which evolve as society changes with history (Connell 1982). To look at class is to look at ‘people in situations, and that means to be concerned with the structure of situations: their limitations, their intractability; and their potential for fundamental change’ (Connell and Irving 1980, p. 7).

Class analysis in the 20th century became further divided between the two threads of analysis which have been described so far. The division is reflected in particular research regarding *class mobility*. In the United States, researchers Blau and Duncan (Blau and Duncan 1967) notably used large scale research to determine how social origins affect probabilities of occupational upward mobility. They concluded that educational attainment had a greater influence on later occupational paths than social origins did. There are other flaws in their hierarchical models of individual characteristics and particular occupations, especially that they do not address relational dynamics of class.

John Goldthorpe’s work, similarly, leans on an occupational relational model. Goldthorpe found that in the UK, though there were significant levels of absolute mobility accompanying society-wide changes in work structures, the relative rates reflected inequality in opportunities for people from different classes (Crompton 2008). Peter Saunders emphasised the significance of individual ability and effort in social mobility, suggesting that conclusions like Goldthorpe’s focus too heavily upon assumed structural class consequences (1997). Saunders’ work echoes the functionalist sentiments which, as mentioned, propose a direct correlation between credential attainment and the filling of socially important roles, and that mobility is not dramatically shaped by social exclusionary forces in open, free democratic market societies.

Class as Culture

A major development, and shift, in class analysis occurred with a turn toward the consideration of *class and culture*. Values, norms, habits, patterns of speech and practice, elements of culture, were seen in much social analysis as separate from the socio-economic dynamics of class. This section traces important developments in the Marxian and Weberian traditions which attempted to consider the ways in which class and culture interact to form and/or perpetuate the class system.

In *The Making of the English Working Class*, British sociologist E. P. Thompson writes: 'Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences [of class] are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms' (1991, p. 10). Thompson's analysis represents a reworking of Marx's notion of *class consciousness* (Johnson 1979), a version which accounts for cultural dynamics of life in classed society. Commenting in defence of the validity of class-cultural analysis, Johnson writes, 'to neglect the *moment* of self-creation, of the *affirmation* of belief or of the *giving* of consent would, once more, return us to 'pure mechanicity' (Johnson 1979, p. 234). Class positions people with particular opportunities and constraints, which influence social practice (*traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms*). Thompson's work was an important milestone in the consideration of class as an important part of the formation of cultural patterns.

U.K. sociologist, Paul Willis, used cultural analysis to inform his study of male counter-school behaviour in *Learning to Labour* (1977). Willis emphasised the fact that the 'lads' had their own cultural logic to rejecting the credential-based school culture. They understood that their options were limited in the world of the credentialed middle class, and their attitudes and behaviour would actually prepare them for the working-class 'shop floor' culture. The strength of Willis' research is in his qualitative understanding of the logics in the behaviour of these particular school age boys, as reasonable expressions of working class potentials and constraints. In the United States, around the same time, Lillian Rubin published *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family* (1976), another important study in the increasing move

toward class-cultural analysis. Rubin interviewed working-class families in an American community to decipher systems or trends of meaning in the patterns of class thought and behaviour. She found that low-income families faced an exceeding challenge of trying to live up to the standards of the material society while being constrained by class. These two studies are examples of increasing openness to considering how economic situations and cultural patterns interact in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Class-cultural analysis focused increasingly on the ways in which people are involved in both resisting and reproducing the power structures of class: the tacit, cultural processes implicated in the structural reproduction of the class system. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's study, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972) was a touchstone for understanding how the *social allocation of respect* functions within social class processes. Sennett and Cobb determined that the power inequalities between classes play out, and in damaging ways, in the connections between gaining credentials (*badges of ability*) and the allocation of social status or respect. All classes, they suggested, are subject to judgments about their dignity based on the merit standards of the dominant classes – the working-class being at a distinct disadvantage due to constraints in opportunity and exposure. They found that working-class people faced nagging self-judgment and a devalued sense of personal worth for their lack of socially valued, middle-class type achievement. The *hidden injuries* are those to working class individuals' dignity, sense of self-worth, and confidence.

Similarly, Michele Lamont's work in *Money, Morals, & Manners* (1992) and *The Dignity of Working Men* (2000) emphasise the *moral* element of class culture. In her qualitative research in *The Dignity of Working Men*, she found that working-class men create and maintain codes of morality which are used as measures of respect and subsequently individuals' dignity, distinct from the measures used by the dominant classes. Working-classes perceive the upper-middle as having deficient moral values in which they place too much emphasis on socio-economic status to the detriment of interpersonal relations. Lamont found that these processes serve to maintain tacit boundaries between classes by way of reinforcing cultural distinctions. Conversely, Lamont found the upper-middle class to also have a series of boundary making values

perspectives (1992). In the U.K. Beverly Skeggs wrote about the discourse of respectability and how this plays out in the lives of working class women (1997). She argues that working class women are equally subject to notions of respectability constructed by more dominant groups, but that they do not have access to the material and cultural resources. In fact, Skeggs suggests that it is the symbolic violence of lowered identity ascription which encourages working class women to reject that identity and focus on a more individualised notion of self and relations with others.

The emphasis on culture was a turn away from structural, deterministic theorisation. Class analysis, mostly concerned with socio-economic processes, was seen to be increasingly irrelevant in light of the greater shifts toward understanding power inequalities according to the symbolic: hegemony, discourse, and sign-value (Crompton 2008). Other theorists, namely Pierre Bourdieu, attempted to further integrate a cultural analysis within class research, rather than rejecting structural understandings (1984).

The *class consciousness* concept, in the development of class-cultural theorisation, was in fact further synthesised with class origin. Pierre Bourdieu's work offers an important example of such synthesis, with his elaboration of the notions of *habitus*, *cultural capital*, and *field* (1984). Both material and cultural background and experiences in family, education, location, and work all serve to establish a person's *habitus*: a system of durable, transposable dispositions which produce very particular ways of perceiving the world and operating in it (Bourdieu 1984). These common experiences form a 'class unconscious' amongst large demographics of society. The *habitus* of the dominant class is accepted by society as the *legitimate* culture. Through inequalities of power, the dominant classes are able to assert their culture as the legitimate one. The dominant class exercises its dominance, making it to appear quite natural and *right* that they are in control. Bourdieu writes: 'Social class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production but by the class *habitus* which is 'normally' (i.e. with a high statistical probability) associated with that position' (1984, p. 372). Cultural capital is a key concept in his debates about the social, hierarchical French society toward the end of the 20th century in his work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Bourdieu 1984). The education system is the

primary site for this cultural process, through the legitimisation, affirmation, and reproduction happening in schools (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

These ideas as developed by Bourdieu had significant theoretical and empirical influence in class research and beyond. An example in Australia is the work by Bennett et al (1999) in *Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures*. The authors replicate Bourdieu's empirical study of taste found in Bourdieu's *Distinction* using quantitative research to chart patterns of cultural practices. They found that there were distinct patterns of cultural taste based on class, but that gender, age, and ethnicity also were significantly associated with patterns of cultural habit.

An element of cultural analysis which further influenced class analysis was the realisation of multiple identities and the intersecting patterns of social life. For example, sociologist Wendy Bottero emphasises that class and gender are inextricably linked (Bottero 2004). Gender relations are perhaps the most prevalent patterns of social relations, and cannot be left out of any study of class. Likewise, argues Bottero, class cannot be left out of considerations of gender inequality. Beverly Skeggs conducted research with working class women in Liverpool whose individual constructions of identity were greatly impacted by their social class positions (Skeggs 1997). Their socio-economic circumstances shaped their experiences with work and with social life, having an impact on how they identify themselves, and how they recognise their own social habits and attitudes in comparison to other people. Likewise, R. W. Connell further analyses the processes of gender by discussing not only the construction of, but conscious enacting of masculinity in Australia (Connell 2005).

Theories of late modernity as a period of self-reflexive individualisation have posed interesting challenges to social class analysis. Work by theorists such as Beck, Giddens, and Bauman suggests that individuals are '...engag[ing] reflexively with their social environment and take strategic risks as they make important life-course decisions' (Lehmann 2009, p. 632). Pakulski and Waters famously titled their 1996 book *The Death of Class*, in which they argue that 'widening material inequality no longer gives rise to class communities, and increasing individualisation has destroyed any relationship that existed between economic position and cultural identity'

(Bottero 2004, p. 988). Anthony Giddens describes the late modern period as one of constant transformation, socially, economically, and individually (Giddens 1991). Individuals are in a position of self-reflexive identity construction (Giddens calls this the ‘project of the self’). This individualised self-identity is the dominant theme of the late modern social experience, not social class. Though class exists, it is not the main concern or point of identification for individuals of late modernity. As Lehmann writes, ‘The individualisation thesis suggests that individuals are reflexive agents who can, relatively independently of their class status, assess their social environments to arrive at decisions that are best suited to their own biographical projects’ (2009, p. 635). A number of class analysts have, since the late 1990s, attempted to incorporate these understandings of late modernity into their class analysis, rather than accepting that class is irrelevant to social analysis.

Late modern class and cultural analysis is described by Devine and Savage as *culturalist class analysis*, which focuses on ‘how cultural processes are embedded within specific kinds of socio-economic practices’ (2000, p. 193). The emphasis is placed on cultural processes while retaining a concern for the socio-economic dynamics of the subjects of research. Crompton (cited in Bottero 2004, p. 986) argues for ‘social class analysis which, rather than seeking to distance themselves from the status concept, are premised upon the inter-relationship of the “economic” and the “social”’. In her study of power dynamics between patients and medical practitioners, Gail Hebson writes of the interest in ‘mapping the ways class practices and identities are articulated and reproduced through cultural processes’ (2009, p. 27). This concern for culture and class, sometimes referred to as the ‘new’ or ‘renewed’ class analysis, is not necessarily new in its aim, which is aptly articulated as concern with how cultural processes are able to reproduce social inequalities. As Devine and Savage write:

The argument is that there is no privileged field of social relations where culture is ‘found’. What establishes the relationships between class and culture (i.e., what establishes the classed nature of cultural consumption) is not the existence of class consciousness, or the coherence or uniformity of a distinct set of cultural dispositions. Rather, the relationship is to be found in the way in which cultural outlooks are

implicated in modes of exclusion and/or domination (Devine and Savage 2000, p. 196).

This may be thought of as a continuation of the traditions of class analysis in regards to exploring the reproduction of social inequality.

Emphasis on the culture of class is prevalent in a number of insightful research projects. British sociologist, Simon J. Charlesworth, used the concepts of *habitus* and *self-reflexivity* to explore working class experiences in industrial areas of Northern England (Charlesworth 2000). He explores the experiences of working-class people, using ‘thick description’ and interview analysis, to examine the impact of class on people’s sense of identity, well being, and life prospects. Another exemplary study in this vein is Fiona Devine’s *Class Practices* in which she details how middle class families employ social and cultural capital to ensure that their children attain the credentials to advance social positions in the family line (Devine 2004). Similarly, in the US, Annette Lareau’s *Unequal Childhoods* is a study of how differences in family practices play a part in the inequality of outcomes in educational institutions (Lareau 2003). The middle classes parent with ‘concerted cultivation’, Lareau finds, while working-class families tend to parent with a model of ‘natural growth’. This idea is especially helpful in understanding the nuances of how families and individuals make the decisions they do about university education, for example. Children from ‘concerted cultivation’ families develop, argues Lareau, a sense of entitlement, sense of anticipation, and confidence in dealings with educational and social institutions. The children who are free to roam, so to speak, are developing skills out of sync with the ‘standards of institutions’, developing ‘an emerging sense of distance, distrust, and constraint in their institutional experiences’ (Lareau 2003, p. 3).

The moral and emotional dynamics of class cultural life are subjects which began to receive more focus in sociological research as well. Andrew Sayer’s work in *The Moral Significance of Class* (2005b) demonstrated that class entails cultural patterns of emotional evaluation which people employ in relations to others and situations. Sayer expanded on Bourdieu’s models of class cultural dynamics to explore how emotions are employed in class processes of shame and recognition (2005a). Gail Hebson’s U.K. research with working-class and middle-class women suggests that

class not only shapes expectations for employment, but that women's classed thinking and feeling also framed how they interpreted these realities and shaped their aspirations accordingly' (Hebson 2009, p. 40). Diane Reay built on Andrew Sayer's work to further develop what she calls the *psychic landscape of class* (Reay 2005). She demonstrates, through qualitative research, that 'beneath socio-economic categorisation, underneath class practices, lies a psychic economy of class that has been largely invisible in academic accounts and commonsense understandings' (Reay 2005, p. 912). These are all examples of the cultural elements of the class experiences, as subjectivities, having an impact on life circumstances and decision making.

The majority of *culturalist* class research has centred on one particular class group or another. There has been, however, a small number of important *culturalist* class mobility studies conducted. Steph Lawler's article, 'Getting out and getting away': *Women's narratives of class mobility* (1999) was a qualitative analysis of the ways in which working-class women encountered and dealt with challenges of becoming middle class, specifically in their interactions in the workplace. She explored the ways in which class differences *within* a person may cause conflict usually found between classes, in social relations. Similarly, some research has been conducted regarding working-class students in universities. Canadian sociologist, Wolfgang Lehmann, demonstrated in his research ways in which working-class university students draw from their family histories as they negotiate their place and identity within middle-class institutions of higher education (Lehmann 2009). Similarly, Diane Reay et al. (2009) explore the ways in which working-class students negotiate social relations within elite universities. They found that students' self-conscious reflexivity is part of what helped them to negotiate their identity and sense of place within the university.

The class *culturalist* literature on social mobility has reached this point. More research needs to be conducted to further explore the cultural dynamics of movement between and among social classes. Among other gaps in this new literature, there is little qualitative account of social mobility which takes into account the scope of, or the narrative of, the whole life-course, from childhood, through school and higher education, and into adult working years. That is precisely the point where this thesis aims to carry the *culturalist* mobility research forward. The research presented in this thesis draws on some of the rich theoretical work mentioned in this review of

literature. The following section of this chapter describes, in some detail, the elements of social theory which have most significantly influenced the research analysis.

Key Concepts: Habitus, Dignity, and Self-reflexivity

This section outlines the theory which informs the analysis within the chapters to follow. This will be a rather brief overview of the essential theoretical understanding informing the analysis within the thesis, and will therefore cover a brief variety of authors and parts of the social theory. The first section further discusses *habitus* and *cultural capital*, as they are explicated by Pierre Bourdieu, as two key terms used throughout the thesis. This will then lead to a brief discussion of recent sociological understandings of the *moral and emotional* dynamics of class. It will then lead into a discussion of both the elements of dignity and recognition found within class processes, and then into how self-reflexivity and narrative influence identity formation and perception.

Habitus and Cultural Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's explanation for the reproduction of social structures, like class, begins with the notion of *habitus*. Habitus refers to an overall set of internalised dispositions toward social practice. It is Bourdieu's way of explicating how social actions are influenced by social background while simultaneously being the result of individual reasoning and improvisation within differing situations. The habitus, in Bourdieu's words, is a:

System of durable, transposable dispositions...principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (1990, p. 53).

The habitus begins to take shape early in life, being the result of social conditioning, in this sense being formed by individual history. In this sense, it is ‘embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product’ (Bourdieu 2002, p. 280). The material conditions of one’s past, of socialisation, have the impact of shaping one’s expectations and tendencies toward life. The limits of material conditions teach one what to expect from life, as Bourdieu writes, ‘Objective limits become a sense of limits...a “sense of one’s place” which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded’ (Bourdieu 1984, p. 471). While the habitus is internalised individual history, Bourdieu emphasises its collective nature, giving rise to social groups originating from similar material conditions. Though these internalised dispositions are grounded in material conditions, they are ‘experienced, represented, and constituted dispositionally as cultural distinctions’ (Swartz 2002, p. 65). This cultural rendering is why Bourdieu uses the dual metaphor of *cultural capital* to refer to the knowledge and repertoire which constitute the habitus.

The habitus is closely linked in Bourdieu’s work with his use of the term *cultural capital*. There are three primary types of capital in his social analysis: economic, social, and cultural. While inequalities in the distribution of economic capital are significant to understanding social class, Bourdieu emphasised the importance of social and cultural capital (both considered symbolic capitals) to the functioning and reproduction of social processes. Cultural capital figures particularly in his work, as cultural knowledge, habits, and tastes which vary according to differing social groups. The differences serve as signifiers of social distinction between varying social groupings. Bennett et al. write that cultural capital is used ‘to explain how advantages of birth or wealth are translated into social prestige by a displacement of these primary indicators of social power into partly autonomous systems of aesthetic and cultural values’ (1999, p. 11). The cultural knowledge, habits, and tastes of varying social groups serve to mark people, betraying their socio-economic origins. Cultural capital of other groups may be attained, however Bourdieu emphasises the conservative nature of habitus; it disposes people toward particular patterns of thought and action. The group characteristic of the habitus which Bourdieu views as of most

significance is that of ‘sense of place in the social order, an understanding of inclusion and exclusion in the various social hierarchies’ (Swartz 2002, p. 64).

The general order of social class hierarchy is maintained by the process of legitimisation of the cultural capital of the upper classes (a primary argument throughout Bourdieu’s *Distinction*). Through the legitimating of some cultural knowledge over others, enabled by the education system and other social structures, the working class come to view their exclusion and shortcomings as personal failures rather than as inculcated through processes of exclusion and subordination (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). This is the part of the workings of the habitus which makes it such a successful reproducer of social hierarchy: it is a process masked by the process of legitimisation, in which the lower classes are complicit in ‘buying in’ to the legitimacy of the upper classes’ cultural capital. As Bourdieu writes:

Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded (1984, p. 471).

Equally, those in possession of the ‘legitimate’ cultural capital (those of the upper classes) feel that their position in the social hierarchy is appropriate. Those brought up in social fields of the dominant fractions of society have the greatest asset: comfort and confidence in the possession and use of their cultural capital. It is their skilled confidence which gives them the appearance of *naturally* having the tastes and habits of the ruling, *legitimate* classes.

When people find themselves amongst other social classes, outside of their habitus, as it were, there is potential for, at the least, much discomfort. Research has suggested that those who experience upward class mobility and live and/or work amongst unfamiliar class habitus experience *habitus dislocation*, which Baxter and Britton (2001, p. 99) define as, ‘a painful dislocation between an old and newly developing habitus, which are ranked hierarchically and carry connotations of inferiority and superiority’. The research presented in this thesis discusses this notion of habitus dislocation, examining individual experiences and what they may tell us about

individual negotiations of class processes. Bourdieu and Passeron suggest that the workings of the habitus are ‘placed beyond the grasp of consciousness and hence cannot be touched by voluntary deliberate transformation’ (1977, p. 94). This thesis explores to what degree these processes are hidden, as well as to what degree they may also be apparent and, in fact, manipulated by individuals who find themselves class-dislocated. Jackson (1996, p. 20) suggests that much of Bourdieu’s work leans toward a structural analysis, (though he dismisses purely objectivist accounts), so as to avoid a purely subjectivist analysis. Still, Bourdieu (cited in Reay et al. 2009, p. 1110) later acknowledged and wrote that the habitus may be ‘restructured, transformed in its makeup by the pressure of the objective structures’.

Uses of Bourdieu’s elaborations on *habitus* and *cultural capital* in other class research were described in the literature review. There are among those examples, a limited few which use the ideas, yet elaborate on them by emphasising that there is, within the habitus, also a potential for expansion, innovation, and change. Individuals may generate practices outside of their cultural repertoire, perhaps even beyond *one standard deviation*. Similarly, this thesis aims to expand upon the ideas of habitus and cultural capital to examine how they, as elements of elaborate social processes, may also be implicit in the potential for individuals to enter unfamiliar social fields, act innovatively, and even successfully learn about and take innovative action within and amongst those of other social classes.

Dignity and the *Hidden Injuries of Class*

The *hidden injuries of class* (Sennett and Cobb 1972) are those which are, similar to the *hidden* nature of habitus, wrought by cultural mechanisms. The legitimisation of the ruling classes conversely suggests illegitimacy in the social practices and cultural knowledge of the lower classes. This sense of illegitimacy is internalised by those who do not share cultural (as well as socio-economic) standing with the higher classes. As Steph Lawler writes (1999, p. 5): ‘One way class inequality works is through making working-class subjectivities pathological, so that class relations are not just economic relations but also relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgment/shame’. Emotions, whether positive or negative (as

listed above), are evaluative judgments of situations and relations, according to Andrew Sayer (2005a, p. 951), ‘acquired through practice as intelligent dispositions which enable us often to react appropriately to situations instantly, without reflection’. The feelings of individuals who encounter differences in class, in differing social fields, may be interpreted as evaluative interpretations of the dynamics of social processes. Analysis in this thesis examines whether the interviewees’ life stories resonate with *class injury*, and in what ways they negotiate these processes.

Social relations, especially with family, are where many of the hidden injuries of class are felt for those who experience social class movement (Lawler 1999; Sayer 2005a; Skeggs 1997). Andrew Sayer writes that: ‘Class inequalities mean that the “social bases of respect” in terms of access to valued ways of living are unequally distributed...’ (2005a, p. 954). Those who become culturally different from their families risk being distanced from their families, and so they face potential rejection from family as well as from the middle- and upper-class social worlds they are entering. The notion of competing loyalties and identities are used in this thesis to explore how this is negotiated by the interviewees. These are what I call the *hidden injuries of class mobility*.

Self-reflexivity and Class

Theories of late modern identity have influenced more recent accounts of class identity, as discussed in the literature review (Lawler 1999; Lehmann 2009; Reay 2005). While the habitus, according to Bourdieu, ‘brings about a unique integration...of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class’ (2005, p. 284), research suggests that individual lives need to be considered in their unique complexity to examine how people may not necessarily exhibit that which is common to others who share similar social origins. Theorisation of the *individualisation* of late modern identity suggests that socio-structural characterisations, such as class, no longer have relevance to those in Western democratic societies, and are perhaps used as imagery for want of a better alternative (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, p. 30). However, the self-conscious reflexivity characteristic of much late modern theory has been seen by some researchers to help

further explicate class processes rather than negate their occurrence. Diane Reay et al. (2009, p. 1105) write that: 'Self-awareness and a propensity for self-improvement become incorporated into the habitus'. Further, in his research with working-class university students, Wolfgang Lehmann found that they offered, '...individualisation narratives that are profoundly shaped by social class' (2009, p. 636). I take this synthesis of understandings – that of the self-reflexive self and the *classed* self – as a starting point in the analysis of the interviewees' life stories. I refer to this as an analysis of *classed projects of the self*.

Methodology

The analysis developed in this thesis is based upon the lives of eleven adult Melburnians; each established in professional or managerial careers and each the first in their immediate families to graduate with a university degree. Participants were selected based on snowball and purposive sampling models (Tranter 2010, p. 137-141). Snowball sampling was used for purposes of reaching participants beyond the realm of the university in which I conducted the research, as well as within. The participants' work experiences are not meant to be representative of contemporary Australian middle- and upper middle-classes, however they ranged broadly from medicine to academia (including teaching and academic writing), international business administration, law, social research and advocacy, and professional writing.

In selecting for the appropriateness of potential interviewees, I also used a purposive sampling method. I required that the candidate 1) considered themselves to have come from a working-class family background (especially that their parents had not participated in professional or managerial work, 2) they had completed at least a bachelor's university degree, 3) they had experience working in professional or managerial work, and 4) that were still working (e.g. not retired) at the time of the interview. These selection criteria allowed for a wide range of life experiences to be represented amongst the interviewees. It also suits the nature of this qualitative research which is intent on examining the meanings participants draw from and in their memories of experience (Jackson 1996, p. 11). A balance was sought regarding

sex, and there are approximately the same number of women and men represented (five women; six men). The sample is composed of adults in middle-age, between 44 and 59 years old.

Working-class origins were determined by first generation university student status as well as parents' occupation backgrounds. Most fathers were employed in manual labour requiring varying levels of training (e.g. factory work, appliance repair, auto mechanic, farm labour; with the exceptions of Lachlan's father who did low level clerical work and Fred's step-father who, after years of electrical labour work, became a low level clerical worker). Most mothers maintained similar types of manual labour (especially factory work) and nearly all carried out full-time domestic duties. None of the interviewees' parents were employed in work generally considered middle-class, such as professional or managerial positions.

Given the theoretical framework of the *habitus*, as a set of dispositions developed and developing since childhood, it was important that the interview allow for the participants to examine and tell stories covering the breadth of their lives; from childhood through educational experiences, and through to their current adult lives. The interview questions were open ended, crafted with the intention of inviting memory searching and the telling of stories. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed in full. The average duration of each was approximately two hours. I asked, in various ways, for the interviewees to recount significant memories regarding their relation to their families as they were growing up, their experiences at school and university, experiences in various work situations, as well as in their adult social and familial lives. In all cases of questioning, the intention was to gain glimpses into their perspectives, emotions, and opinions regarding their own experiences. Due to the personal nature of the interview topics, most of the interviewees expressed a wide range of emotion in the telling of their lives; from joy and laughter to sadness and melancholy. I carried my own memory of these expressed emotions, as the interviewer, and used them to inform my understanding of the stories they told.

Memory-based research is, of course, subject to analysis of something unreliable: memory. However, the aim was not perfect memory but to understand the interviewees' experience of phenomena. Shaw explains it this way:

...the validity and value of the personal document are not dependent upon objectivity or veracity....On the contrary, it is desired that [their] story will reflect [their] own personal attitudes and interpretations. Thus, rationalisations, fabrications, prejudices, exaggerations are quite as valuable as objective descriptions... (Shaw 1966, p. 2-3, cited in Minichiello 1995, p. 94).

The early working-title of the thesis, before the interviews were conducted, was: *Navigating class-cultural boundaries: Discovering common factors in successful upward social mobility in Australia*. When I began to conduct the interviews, it became apparent that there are no *common factors* which could be separated out to explain a story of upward mobility, and if perhaps there are, a small qualitative study is not the way to find them. These people's life stories, I realised, lend themselves to an analysis of their social practices, dispositions, and ways of making meaning. The emphasis went from finding commonalities amongst the group of interviews to finding nuances and details about how each individual negotiated their life challenges and opportunities. This happened, in part, because the interview process itself demonstrated how deeply integrated the experience of class is with life as lived, not something which can be separated out. This caused me to alter the interview questions, making them more open to the impulses, imaginations, and moods of the interviewee. For example, the questions related to family were, early in the research, more specific. Later in the research, I was likely to ask such open-ended questions as: *When you think of your family growing up, what memory first comes to mind?* Some of the most surprising and evocative stories and quoted passages in the thesis came as a result of such questions.

The coding process followed a similar trajectory to the development of the interviews. Initially, I read through the interview transcripts looking for significant themes. Using an arduous system of cutting and pasting and creating new electronic documents, I spent months sorting and re-sorting according to common themes. Early on, it made good sense to organise the chapters as they are now, by life sequence of experience: family, education, work. There were dozens of themes, interviewee characteristics, attitudes, and other things within each interview which I thought were significant

enough to write about. I shuffled and re-structured them all, ad nauseam, hoping to begin writing when the pieces fit in the right combination. This took well over six months, with apparently no solution in sight, until it occurred to me to try organising the chapters according to types of experience, rather than strictly by theme. This was the breakthrough. This was also when the working-title of the thesis came to refer to *negotiating social mobility*. For example, I began to write about the various *experiences* and *negotiations* of feeling like an integrated part of the family growing up, as compared to those whose *experience* with family was that of an outsider.

Interview quotes used in the analysis are verbatim, true to the interviews, excluding the names of the interviewees, the names of other places and people, and a few biographical details. These details have been altered to preserve the anonymity and some privacy of the eleven participants. Their lives provide rich ‘data’. They are vibrant illustrations of the staggering complexity of being working and becoming middle class. It is not presumed that these eleven lives tell the story of every person or even Melburnian who experiences upward social mobility. However, it is the aim of this thesis to pursue productive insight by examining their lives- as they know them, and as they told them to me. In the following chapters, I present their lives to you.

Negotiating Family

We all violate in some way the place assigned for us in the family myth, but upward mobility gives that passage a peculiar twist.

Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (1998, p. 17)

I think there's a weird way, or twisted way, in which I never stop trying to please my family, who liked me being, inverted commas, successful, but always had to remain ambivalent about it. Well I couldn't have pleased them in a million years by being like them, because I didn't read romance novels and stuff... They've always found it an admirable difference. But it's meant they think I'm like a different substance, and they can't extend a hand to me. (Rachel)

Ours is a century of uprootedness. All over the world, fewer and fewer people live out their lives in the place where they were born.

Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World* (1995, p. 1)

Experiences within family are where the stories of straddling class worlds begin. The formation of habitus begins from birth, where patterns of thinking and behaving are internalised and naturalised. This is Bourdieu's notion of the past as present: 'The habitus – embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' (2002, p. 280). Working class habitus is the unseen inheritance of working class children. However, for the interviewees, the story of habitus formation is not nearly so straightforward or disguised by a process of naturalisation. Their lives are marked by the need to reconcile ambivalences and disruption to their identities and social relations. Those processes began in the everyday life of their family.

Making sense of two class worlds within the self and within social relations began early on. This chapter demonstrates the intricacies of the early life negotiation of growing up working class but having a sense of self as other, different from family and community. It will be shown that self-reflexivity plays a key role in adaptation and the working out of one's place in the social world. 'What is relatively underdeveloped in Bourdieu's analysis,' writes Lawler (1999, p. 14), 'is the way in which this history [*habitus*] is subject to disruption when persons move across categories such as those of class'. This chapter undertakes such analysis, and emphasises the intricacies of *habitus disruption*; the most significant point being how the *disruption* is negotiated well before reaching the middle-class institutions of higher education and industry. The chapter will also analyse the interview narratives as a retroactive identification of the self. It will be shown how people place themselves in the telling of their family stories in such a way as to constitute a congruous sense of the self. The interviewees' subjective experiences provide insights into social class processes at work in the family which may otherwise be overlooked.

The interviews hold two types of narrative themes in the life stories: '*breaking away*' versus '*carrying the torch*'. A number of the interviewees saw themselves as having broken ranks with their families, while others viewed their lives as logical or natural progressions of the life trajectories of their parents, what I will call *carrying the torch*. This theme is especially important to the first section of the chapter which discusses the interviewees' sense of *belonging* within their working class families and neighbourhoods, despite early recognition of differences between themselves and others in their social worlds. The second section explores their perceptions of and interactions with the material realities of their family's financial circumstances and their parents' work. It explores their negotiations of the practical difficulties as well as the cultural mechanisms of their socio-economic backgrounds. The third section, then, specifically focuses on their interaction and reflexive involvement with the moral values and ideals of their families. The fourth section explores the significance of the characteristics which the interviewees ascribe in the interviews to their younger selves, and what that meant for the development of their identities and their interactions with family and community. The third and fourth sections compare and contrast the values and traits which the interviewees ascribe to their families and to themselves, revealing more tacit ways in which they attempt to reconcile the

ambivalences of being working class and simultaneously being and becoming middle class.

Fit and Misfit: Experiences of Belonging in Family and Community

Early in their lives, most of the interviewees were increasingly aware of feeling different from their families. These felt differences ‘play out’ through an unanticipated element of their personal histories which emerged during the interviews: stories and sentiments of family and community *belonging*. Their accounts of early life relations to family and community were concerned with belonging and acceptance. Some offered narratives with a prevailing theme of what I will call *fit* (a sense of being an insider or an accepted, valued, and intimate member of the group) and those who experienced *misfit* (a sense of being an outsider, not accepted or insecure about their acceptance as a member of the group). Though there were the two prevailing types of narrative, at times each of the interviewees felt like they were different from their families, and other times like they were very much the same. These ambivalences, and how they are dealt with, illustrate the self-reflexivity characteristic of all the interviewees. This section discusses how experiences of belonging were part of early class identity formation. It will be shown that class identity is formed not only through mechanisms of *habitus* and *cultural capital*, but through negotiations of subjective experiences entailed in social class processes.

‘Upward class mobility’ may too easily be thought of as a success story of escaping disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, just as there are ‘hidden injuries of class’, there are *hidden injuries of class mobility*. The interviewees who had a sense of themselves as unacceptable and unaccepted as member of their families were especially prone to these injuries. The sense of being a misfit, an outsider in the family, resulted from their own sense of difference. Joel, for example, said ‘*I often wonder if I was adopted or something*’, as he spoke about his own high levels of ambition and enterprise compared to his family’s less aspirational attitudes. The sense of being a *misfit* was also imposed on some, like Rachel whose father would say to her, ‘*...you think you’re too good for us don’t you? Get out of here*’, when she was, in

her words, *'doing too well at school'*. Having outsider status in the family, due to differences such as aspiration and intellect (monikers of middle class cultural capital), came at the price for some of estrangement, rejection, and shame. It is what happens when strained class relational dynamics enter the home.

Working-class identity is pathologized through cultural mechanisms of class. Steph Lawler writes (as quoted earlier) that: 'One way in which class inequality works is through making working-class subjectivities pathological, so that class relations are not just economic relations but also relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgment/shame' (1999, p. 5). Hierarchical pathologization occurred between the interviewees and their families, within the home. The interviewees demonstrated middle class characteristics early on, and this was seen, by some, as a risk to the family. The superiority/inferiority relations of class were brought into the relationships between the interviewees and their families. Some family members felt their dignity was at risk when confronted by a high achieving daughter or son, though for most this was not as explicit as it was for Rachel, who told this story about her father:

[He would] come home each week night after work and wake us up with his tortured self. And when I started doing too well at school, he would wake me up and say 'you think you're a brain; you think you're too good for us don't you? Get out of here', and stuff like that. Again, totally threatened by it all, feeling that my success was a mirror to him being a failure...And that obviously has a big effect on what you want to do in life. Mainly I wanted to be accepted and not look different or stand out.
(Rachel)

Being an outsider in the family is laden with class dynamics of hierarchy of worth. Rachel is a reminder to her father of his own low social status and lack of material success. He lashed out at her, reflecting the wrestling match he had with his own self worth, in relation to his social status and capacities. This reverse class pathologization occurred in most of the interviewees' childhoods. Class inequalities are maintained, in part, through the demeaning or pathologizing of lower classes. This research suggests that the reverse may occur, from childhood, for those who are born in working-class

families but begin to remind their families of the social stigmatisation they are forced to reconcile with, from higher classes. The families like Rachel's regarded the child as an affront to their status and or achievements. The unfortunate result may look like an emotional class skirmish in the home, between parent and child. Damages from this sort of disconnect were carried with the interviewees throughout their adult lives.

This reverse pathologization even occurred, though to lesser degrees, for interviewees whose families provided at least some semblance of the academically, intellectually supportive environment that many middle class children are brought up in (Lareau 2003). Most were taught the value of hard work, but with an amendment regarding status:

[My parents are] coming from the old background, where um, you know, you don't rise above your station, which is a very working class sort of philosophy, or mantra. Um, you know your place. You work hard and you do as well as you can, but. (Christine)

The 'but' on the end of the sentence encompasses an ambivalent instruction to the children of such a working class family: work yourself into a more secure socio-economic situation, but also do not. When the interviewees showed signs that they were *doing as well as they can*, the resulting estrangement and guilt proved a strain on their family relationships and, as will be seen throughout this and the following chapters on education and work, had lasting negative consequences. For those *misfits*, there was either an absence of, or at least a lack of, recognition of worth. This led to childhoods with ambivalent experiences of being part of a working class family and simultaneously estranged from it, feeling displaced within their home life.

The *misfit* narratives conveyed not only emotional struggles and damages, but also the usefulness of being an outsider. More specifically, the interviewees managed to put their outsider status to use in the development of their identity within working-class homes. (This theme will be developed more in section four of this chapter dealing with individual characteristics). Each interviewee was faced with the need to reconcile their felt differences, within themselves, or in regards to their identity. Disconnect with family led to situations of discontent and pain, but also became opportunities for

identity development. Where Rachel was made to feel guilty for standing out, and vaguely told to ‘*get out*’, she views this as forcing her to, in her own words, find validation elsewhere. For Rachel, as for others, it would have to come from within:

I never learned to submit...Somehow or other I’ve always gotten away with bridge burning. It doesn’t mean I’ve gotten rich or anything. But I never wanted power...I’ve just always said what I wanted to. So, you don’t end up in a good place but you feel you have your integrity. (Rachel)

The words here represent something of an independent identity which emerged from disconnect between individuals and families. In Rachel’s case, she did not submit to the challenges presented to her early habitus formation. Instead, she began to learn from a young age about being true to her ideas and ideals despite opposition. This learning to challenge authority, from her working-class background, in order to ‘*feel you have your integrity*’ is the very strength of commitment to a self which she employed throughout her life to be working-class as well as become middle-class. The lesson learned was that approval has to come from within. When there is a lack of dignity and or validation coming from the family in regards to the emerging middle-class signifiers such as academic interest, those interviewees indicated that they turned inward for approval, learning to be comfortable as different. This proved to serve them well when they later entered fields of education and work in which they again felt like outsiders. They talked about being self-guided and self-motivated, as a result of these earlier struggles.

For those who offered narratives of *fit* in their families, the negotiation of class identity is no less complex. The interviewees who felt a sense of belonging in their families, despite feeling different from them, were liberated to ‘be themselves’, as in, feel more comfortable inhabiting their sense of self as already different from their family. Vic, for example, was different from his family but also different from many of the children at school, more bookish, and he received severe bullying as a result. This included having his locker vandalised, his books and art supplies stolen, and being called abusive names. But at home he says he was never bullied nor felt out of place. Those who felt they were an accepted part of their family despite their

differences, offered contrast to the discouraging ‘othering’ which marked the *misfit* narratives:

In fact, it was seen as a, you know, my parents were very proud of [my success at school] I think. They never sort of talked about it. It’s funny because you talk to my brothers and sisters about it, and I didn’t see it. But they are like yeah, they always thought you were smart and great. I used to help a lot around the home...when my mother was working I used to help.
(Vic)

The *fit* narratives also told of a comfort level with working class family background which suggests pride in and the usefulness of that heritage. These interviewees cited integration and acceptance as a part of a working-class family as an integral part of their sense of self, even as different. For some, it was memories of family togetherness and interdependence which were held as endearing memories. For others there were more important signifiers of identity which they associated with their having come from working class families. Alexander, for example, spoke about coming from a family of story tellers:

[My family members], who you may not think of as literary as other people, have great capacity to construct a story. Inherently, they understand narrative arches and plot, without having to be told how to do it. [...] I think I’ve been very fortunate...no such thing in our family as, you know, children should be seen and not heard. At our kitchen table, everyone had, well, I was going to say that everyone had their own space, but they didn’t, it was always competing, but you know, I would never tell people to shut up, for instance, if someone had a story to tell, so.
(Alexander)

He viewed this element of his working class family as important to his development into the type of person to write and publish in middle class arenas. There is evidence here of mutual respect and dignity occurring in Alexander’s childhood, which suggest a more integrated sense of development, despite some of his differences.

The narratives of *fit* and *misfit* regarding the families also related to their communities. Each interviewee conveyed both pleasant memories of interaction with neighbours and local spaces as well as memories of disconnect and unpleasant feelings about their own sense of belonging. The interviewees offered ambivalent narratives of community belonging, but they gave way to patterns of overall *fit* and *misfit*.

A few of the interviews offered vivid details of social problems in the neighbourhood. Some said that they were comfortable in those surroundings despite the violence and other crime on display at times in the area, while others were repelled, ready to escape. Despite the threats of his neighbourhood, Alexander managed to navigate the landscape skilfully, and did not express regret about the poverty and situations he faced, but rather saw them as the contexts in which he gained a political sensibility for social justice. Similarly, Vic discussed the bullying he received growing up as disturbing, yet he credits his interaction with a poor working-class community as giving him the insight and ability to empathise and better care for this same demographic within his care as a medical professional. He contrasts this empathy to the degrading comments his upper middle-class colleagues make about working-class patients. Vic identifies with both worlds and recognises the need to respect both. There is in these accounts insecurity and instability, as well as a level of dignity and value attached to the backgrounds and situations of these working-class neighbourhoods.

The duality of identity was for some interviewees brought to their attention through the exposure to different social class worlds. Those people credit this early exposure when explaining their ability to adapt to different social situations later on. There was a dual habitus formation occurring. In some instances, this meant a loss. Adriana's family, for example, intentionally removed themselves from the rest of the Greek community, for aspirational class reasons:

I spent most of my life not integrated into a community because my parents were trying to isolate themselves from any Greek community and now I'm trying to reintegrate myself with my family, and try and find some sense of community. (Adriana)

The result for Adriana was exposure to a middle class world (in education and to some degree in social circles), but also a loss, for the shame she associated from a young age with being Greek. The resulting class adaptability, though, was something which several of the interviewees discussed. Francesca is a good example of this:

I think about the childhood I've had, and I can mix it with rough country folk, eating potatoes and roast lamb, going to church, leading a very simple life, chopping some wood. And then on my father's side, there was patrons and galleries and things like that. Even though, he was in the black sheep part of his family. But I was exposed to that. You know, as an anthropologist, getting the native perspectives, I've been doing that all my life. You know, the poor kid going to the posh school. When I go to Ballarat where my mother and father are, I'd be out there with the killing [of] chickens. Then I'd be going with Auntie Connie to the gallery, introduced to people. So that's been going on all my life. So, I don't know where I sit. (Francesca)

This lends confusion as well as flexibility. Francesca continued to inhabit class cultural differences within her own self, and the processes began from a young age as she was exposed to class differences within her extended family. Many of the interviewees felt themselves to be double misfits; not entirely at home in the family, and not entirely at home in middle class institutions. The processes of reconciling those identities came with loss as well as gain, as they learned to negotiate identity incongruence.

Escaping Insecurity: Family Socio-economic Constraints

My mom and dad were probably my greatest mentors, because I saw them struggle through life. I thought: I'm never going to do that... I'm moving out of here, and I'll do whatever I've got to do to make it happen. (Joel)

[For] all the eulogies to equal opportunities, comparatively little is written on the trauma of leaving and isolation, the disdain with which one is supposed to treat the place from which one has come and the terrible guilt that we and not they have got out, have made it, and will work in conditions that they will never know (Lucey et al. 2003, p. 12).

Each of the interviewees' families struggled financially. This ranged from periods of joblessness and homelessness for some, to parents gathering just enough money for their child to attend private school for others. All of the interviewees recount knowing that their families were limited in their social options because of lower incomes and financial situations. This section reviews their reactions to family socio-economic potentials and constraints. One would expect, in light of the social reproduction patterns of class habitus, the interviewees to inhabit the life expectations of their family's material conditions. Bourdieu writes that: 'Objective limits become a sense of limits...a "sense of one's place" which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded' (1984, p. 471). However, the interviews revealed that class processes involve self-reflexive negotiation of identity and emotions which have potential to alter class patterns. This section explores the ways in which the perceptions of and interactions with working-class material constraints are integral to the negotiation of class movement.

The parents' employment played an important role in the interviewees' lives. They viewed the types of employment and the contingent financial circumstances of their parents as something to be avoided. Their parents' work was seen as physically arduous, monotonous, low paying, unfulfilling, and especially hard on the body in wear and tear. Factory, farm, maintenance, cleaning and mechanic labour was seen as something to be avoided. However, coupled with this desire to avoid these types of jobs, were expressions of admiration of their parents' resourcefulness and capacity to *make life work* with jobs considered unfavourable. Many of the interviewees believe they learned ingenuity and resourcefulness from parents who made something with very little. Stephanie Lawler reported in her analysis of seven upwardly mobile women (Lawler 1999), that they did not mark their mobility primarily by measurable socio-economic demarcations, such as wealth, income, and house size, as compared to

their parents, but rather by cultural signifiers. The same may be said of the interviewees in this research: the cultural is embedded in the material. Far from being straightforward rejections of their family backgrounds, there were elements of inheritance and loss, security and insecurity, material lack and resourcefulness.

This thesis points to experiences of constraint, but goes a step further to examine the ways constraints may be put to use in the lives of the upwardly mobile. Confinement, frustration, insecurity, shame – these are familiar themes seen differently when viewed through the lens of how they were used in the continuing structuring of identity and life paths for the interviewees.

The interviewees each expressed desires to ‘get away’ and avoid the constraints experienced by their families. The confinement and limitations of material constraints were the most often repeated concerns. One way patterns of social arrangements are reproduced is through the internalisation of individual expectations of class. People make choices based on their experiences and observations of success and failure, given the potentials and constraints of the people in their social milieu. This predisposes working-class people, according to Bourdieu, toward particular courses of action which are, in a sense, self-selecting or self-limiting. My interviewees appear to defy this type of social class structuration. They had motivations and situational rationalisations which propelled them to escape their socio-economic roots rather than feel that they were entirely limited by them. Joel’s words, *‘I’m moving out of here, and I’ll do whatever I’ve got to do to make it happen’*, reverberate throughout most of the interviews.

The desire for security was one such motivator, and perhaps one of the strongest. For example, Alexander said:

A secure income becomes so important to you when you’ve seen so much insecurity in people. [...] I’ve missed days off work, but I’ve always had a job. I’m ready to admit, I would, I would favour a secure job rather than a more interesting but insecure job, because of that fear. ... So, you know, I don’t take the chances I might take if I was single, or if I’d grown up

differently. I don't have a safety net. I'm the safety net. You know, I can't go home to mum [Laugh]. (Alexander)

Like the other interviews, this story reflects the desire to escape the financial insecurities of his working-class family, but is also a wrestling match of loyalties. They do not want to be thought of as having compromised ideals. Risk is unequally distributed amongst social classes. To be in a position of economic vulnerability means, to the interviewees, not only the risk of not having basic necessities, but of not being able to maintain ideals learned in the family. '*It's not actually very nice being working class*', said Andrew, who otherwise praised his family background as having provided him with a happy childhood. The *not very nice* he refers to is the risk involved in working-class life.

Damage to physical health and well being was another risk which the interviewees desired to mitigate. There were accounts of actual physical threat as well as concern about exposure to chemicals, drug and alcohol abuse, and family attitudes about not caring, or leaving things to chance. Andrew, for example, is more risk averse than his father whose attitudes toward his own health and that of the family were haphazard at best. His father's heavy drinking was perceived as common practice amongst the men he knew. Andrew consciously alters his personal behaviours and choices based on insecurity about how his father ran the family, saying:

Whilst it was warm and communal at one level, life was also disorganised. [...] You know, a parent died, another parent drank a lot. People smoked and drank. Life was just, just get on with it. There was no planning, there was no superannuation, there was no insurance, there was none of that sort of stuff that more educated people cover themselves with. And they're things that when I look back, I don't want to be like that, I don't want to be like my father, I don't want to leave my kids without money and that sort of stuff. (Andrew)

The experience of excessive risk due to economic struggle motivated the interviewees to 'get away', but they did not entirely escape the losses inherent in being from a struggling working class family. One such loss expressed by a number of the

interviewees was on a very personal level: the compromise of some of their own ambitions and work dreams. For some, like Adriana, there was guilt associated with the experience of watching her parents struggle to not only make ends meet but provide special opportunities:

For a long time I held the belief that I needed to repay them, because they were very poor putting me through school and supporting me through university ...I really felt that I had to somehow really live this out for them...*I'll show them, I'll show them.* I mean, I have the diaries that actually still have that in there, like some horrible march. I wanted to be a speech and drama teacher, I didn't want to be a lawyer. [...] I would say the defining drivers would be my, yeah, my my my mother, instilling this enormous competitive sense into me; and guilt [laugh]. (Adriana)

The level of upward mobility Adriana experienced was influenced by her emotional involvement with her family's financial struggles, as she lived out the ambitions of her mother rather than her own. Inherited fear of risk led others to defer their ambitions. Christine, for example, waited 15 years to begin a university course, at the advice of her father who persuaded her that a job was more sensible and certain. They carried with them the effects of their families' insecurities into adulthood, which can be seen in the honesty of Alexander, an academic: *'I would favour a secure job rather than a more interesting but insecure job, because of that fear'*.

Another motivator for moving out of disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances was the social shame felt as a result of those circumstances. There were stories of encountering the hierarchical mechanisms of inequality of dignity. 'Class inequalities,' writes Sayer, 'mean that the "social bases of respect" in terms of access to valued ways of living are unequally distributed...' (2005a, p. 954). This is seen in a passing comment Andrew made about an experience at school of, *'... someone throwing money on the ground and saying that I could pick it up because I needed it, my family was poor, or something...'* The interviewees often qualified these types of stories with statements suggesting it was *'not that big of a deal'*, as though to reclaim some of the dignity which they believe their families were denied. The embarrassment of being compared to others with more material resources belies the social processes

of moral worth which get measured in material positions and possessions. The following passage from Lachlan's interview exemplifies the anxiety of the intersection of class cultural worlds:

Sometimes I was embarrassed having friends around in my house. We had a very basic house. My mother would not let anyone smoke, or you know, terrified and had to keep the curtains down cause she didn't want to fade the carpet ...It was the mentality that you preserve things for life, from the depression; [Versus other] people who are mixing in a much higher socio-economic ability. So, in some senses I felt disadvantaged and embarrassed about it. (Lachlan)

The experiences of insecurity and shame are strong motivators for moving away from working-class backgrounds. But it is the experience of confinement intrinsic to material constraints which most seemed to instigate the desire for social class movement. Close living quarters, lack of opportunity, and limited choices were some of the experiences which left the interviewees feeling confined. The limitations of the working-class experience would predictably narrow individual expectations for what is possible or especially possible for the interviewees' lives. However, these experiences tended to be used as fuel for the engine of desire to escape such circumstances. This emotionally charged passage from Francesca addresses her living situation growing up with her mother, who suffered from mental illness:

There was three generations in one room until I was 18. So, I have to say that was a bit of an ordeal. I never had my own space. I never had any privacy. My mother used to lie awake in bed and whistle and smoke, all through the night. Imagine the night before final exams; I'd be leaning down from the top bunk going *shut-up*. [Laugh], *shut-up, I need to sleep* [laugh]. So, a little bit of an ordeal. I think for me, I realised if I didn't get a good education, I would end up just as helpless as my parents. And certainly they could see it was very important. Your ticket out of that sort of world was to get educated. Maybe I was lucky I was a smart kid. Smart enough. (Francesca)

The constraints of working-class family life are material but they are equally emotional. For those like Lachlan, the confines of material disadvantage had an impact on the emotional contentment of the family. He spoke in the interview several times about the *joylessness* of such a family life, as though his family were robbed of the joy that could have been theirs were it not for the sombre emotional atmosphere accompanying the necessity for strict financial discipline.

It was a strict, controlled mindset, no waste; whereas, the upper middle class was much more affluent. Not as concerned about cost. But things I didn't like about my own environment, it just seemed a bit too structured, a bit too narrow. (Lachlan)

The themes of loss and lack mark many of the stories told by the interviewees. This is not unlike what has been found in other accounts of the working-class. However, the uses made of these experiences by those who experience social class movement are what need to be considered more carefully to understand the potential of the habitus for self-reflexivity and for change. For the interviewees, aspects of their working-class backgrounds were framed in their accounts as being advantageous to their lives later when they moved in middle class fields. Confidence, according to Bourdieu (1984), is the true asset to the middle and upper classes whose habitus dispose them to the cultural patterns of thought and behaviour congruent with the powerful side of society's power inequalities. It is *confidence* in the possession and successful wielding of the cultural knowledge and manners of the higher classes which lends those who possess it the social perception of legitimacy.

Those who come out of the working-classes and into the social fields of the higher classes would not be expected to exude confidence, even if they perceive and somehow inhabit the cultural patterns of their new environment. However, it was the very experiences of working-class family life which some interviewees managed to *transfer* into effective negotiation of middle class lives. Francesca, for example, cites her grandmother's practical instructions and influence as the source of her confidence in finding solutions when faced with new situations:

She was a country woman, she made sure I knew how to cook and sew. Really arcane bits of knowledge... You know, silly little tricks that poor people know. Like when your bed sheets are going to wear out in the middle. You cut them down the middle then sew them so the worn bits get moved. (Francesca)

Many of the interviewees viewed their families' difficult circumstances not as something regrettable, but as something which helped them to become resourceful people. The practical inventiveness was later transferred to a sense of competence and capabilities in middle class contexts.

Nine of the eleven interviewees felt that their parents were not able to fulfil their potential in the work they were doing, whether in physical, emotional, and or intellectual capacities, due to material constraints. Stories emerged of one or both parents' intellect and capabilities which were stilted by lack of opportunity. This sense of their parents' unfulfilled potential was internalised and expressed as a sense of duty to try and take advantage of opportunities their parents were not able to. Many felt that their parents had what Vic termed *bad opportunity*. Vic's mother had a mental acuity and wit which stood out amongst the people she worked with at a factory. The *bad opportunity* he speaks of is recognition that socio-economic constraints disabled his mother from experiencing higher education. The interviewees felt the frustration of their parents' stilted capacities, especially when the waste of potential benefited others:

...She's a bright woman [her mother]. I think she was also proud and cheeky and so on. But it got her nowhere except pregnant to a rich boy. And her brains could go nowhere except make money for the boss in the factory. She felt extremely intimidated by having a daughter who was an achiever... (Rachel)

Christine also told of her father not fulfilling his intellectual, specifically academic, potential. Social expectations required him to leave school as a young teenager, right when he had received a scholarship to attend a grammar school. As Christine said, '*So, that's part of the biography really, thinking that there was potential there for my*

father that wasn't realised'. Subsequently, she saw herself as picking up on the path of studies where her father was compelled to step off. This was common amongst the interviewees, a feeling of *carrying the torch*, of succeeding a heritage of potential limited by economic constraints. Fred was like several who even described detail about family several generations back, describing their achievements and the academic institutions they attended such as Cambridge. The industrious and inventive, active members of his family are very important to Fred as an explanation of where his industriousness comes from. Similarly, Joel took pride in that his father was meant to attend Melbourne University, and received a scholarship to do so (although, in the end he did not attend because he wanted to be a jockey).

A sense of having inherited potential became a part of the stories the interviewees told themselves about their lives; it became a part of their confidence as they moved amongst middle class worlds of academia and work. The meanings found in their stories, in their pasts, was an essential part of the self-reflexive processes of moving amongst differing social classes. In his phenomenological research of working-class experiences, Charlesworth writes that he,

...depict[s] a relation to being, contained in working class people's economic and social conditions, that forecloses upon and makes almost impossible autonomous ways of becoming a self-developing subject, of value for oneself and to others; capable of founding through oneself and others an intersubjective realm of mutually constituted empathic self-involvement (Charlesworth 2000, p. 7-8).

It may be thought almost impossible to *become* something other or different, because of the working-class material conditions. However, the experiences of the eleven interviewees suggest that social class experience may also be the ground from which innovative (if not at times damaged and confused) lives may spring.

Values and Capacities

You learn and ultimately you take them on [middle-class ideas] and believe in them yourself. I don't think the same way I used to when I was living in the country. (Andrew)

The antinomy of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' ceases to be a problem if these terms are seen as indicative of the way human experience vacillates between a sense of ourselves as subjects *and* objects; in effect, making us feel sometimes that we are world-makers, sometimes that we are merely made by the world.

Michael Jackson, *Things as They Are* (1996, p. 21)

The interviewees were asked: *What values do you most appreciate having learned from your family?* In other words, what do they make of the values and perspectives held by their families? Values are made into measures of moral worth, argues Andrew Sayer (2005a), as social classes operate partially on assumptions that one group possess moral qualities which the 'other' does not. The interviewees offered accounts of their families' values and perspectives which both affirmed and challenged stereotypes of working-class families. In both cases, the ways they negotiated values suggest a complex engagement with the ideals of their families, their own identities, and their family relationships. This complex reconciliation of patterns of thought and belief was most evident in three types of family stories: *ambition*, *learning*, and *tolerance*. This section explores the ways moral dynamics of class require careful, self-reflexive reconciliation between the self, the family, and social values for those who experience class movement.

'Better yourself families' and 'Don't rise above your station'

The interviewees were divided between those who felt their parents had, what I call, an attitude for *doing things* and one of *having things done to*. It was, in the accounts

of family life, a question of perceptions of active individual will versus passivity. This was connected to views of shrinking and expanding horizons. One type of narrative included families who saw their own horizons as expandable and or expanding. Another type of narrative described feelings and actions indicating quiet resolution in stagnant circumstances. The interviewees described what coming from one of these family types meant to their own lives. This section explores what impact family ambitions had on the interviewees' identities and relationships with their families.

Approximately half of the interviewees regarded their families as ambitious, what Rachel termed *better yourself* working-class families. This meant different things to each person, but it could generally be seen this was an important value they engaged with. This sort of ambition was seen to have been hugely beneficial in influencing the life paths of the interviewees. But as the phrase *better yourself* instead of *better your circumstances* indicates, values such as ambition are not seen strictly as socio-economic advantage or disadvantage but social evaluations of moral worth in social status. This phenomenon complicates the interviewees' negotiation of identity and familial relationships. 'Working-class fathers', write Sennett and Cobb, 'see the whole point of sacrificing for their children to be that the children *will* become unlike themselves' (1972, p. 128).

Sacrifices made by parents were seen by the *better yourself* families as a necessary effort. The interviewees felt grateful and indebted. Adriana, for instance, said that, '*Mum never bought herself anything, and according to her we were always in financial difficulty...I was given every opportunity to launch myself up the social ladder*'. Working hard to get ahead was seen as an asset which working-class children could incorporate later into middle-class lives. The following passages illustrate this point:

...To be a realist. You know, pragmatic. If you want to get ahead, you just got to get out and work and do stuff. Yeah, so that side of you know, my father was useful, you know. Just get on with it, get working. If you want to get anywhere, just work hard, that sort of approach to life. (Andrew)

... You need to make your own luck...something I got from my grandmother and that country side of my family. That most things in life you've got to roll up your sleeves and bloody do it. Do it. Learn while you're going...I guess I'm proud of that in myself. I really like that capacity... You don't have to worry; you can feel confident and strong and believe in your own future if you know how to do stuff. (Francesca)

The ambition of some working-class families is complicated by the notion that one ought not to stand out amongst their family. It is, in part, an expression of desire to maintain bonds amongst family members in recognition of the divisive nature patterns of achievement and the social allocation of respect. The social rendering of dignity based on their performance and achievement maintains boundaries between social classes, and poses a threat to relationships between the upwardly mobile and their families. Sennett and Cobb write, 'The uncomfortable feelings about those who do not 'make something of themselves' when they have a chance, come out of an assumption that there can be respect only as they become in some way distinctive, as they stand out from the mass' (1972, p. 183). This dynamic played out in families like Christine's. As quoted earlier, she said of her family's attitude regarding ambition: '*You know, you don't rise above your station. You know your place*'.

The same dynamic - the social allocation of dignity - had to be negotiated amongst those whose families were presented as passive, or as *having things done to*. Those interviewees learned from an early age that they were responsible for making opportunities for themselves in families which did not encourage ambition. '*I was fairly self managed as a kid*', said Rachel, '*very much like an immigrant kid, I was speaking for myself and my family*'. The sense of differentiation from her unambitious family was an experience similar to others who used this feeling to solidify their early sense of themselves as industrious and self-driven. The initiative learned at a young age as a result is seen as an asset to their later efforts in education and work.

Knowledge and Learning

Working-class and middle-class families tend to have differing approaches to their children's education. The interviewees' family stories uncovered a result similar to what Annette Lareau discovered in her research into American family practices (2003), but with a peculiar twist. Lareau discusses the differences between the middle-class approach of *concerted cultivation* and the working-class approach of *natural growth*. Not surprisingly, most of the Melbourne families of this thesis took a *natural growth* approach to child rearing. However, there were two families which distinctly fit a *concerted cultivation* approach. In all of these cases, the interviewees made particular uses and found meanings in the different patterns of family practice.

Some of the concerted cultivation was in the form of intentionally pursuing educational opportunity for their children. Lachlan and Adriana both recognised that having this type of familial influence propelled them toward teaching themselves self-disciplined achievement. Adriana's account of her mother's instructions, in which '*grooming is everything*' were wrought with monikers of class distinction and exclusion in pursuit of becoming middle-class:

I was given every opportunity to launch myself up the social ladder. I was taught elocution from a very early age so I wouldn't speak like Effie, a television character here who has a very Greek accent [laugh]...I was actually taught to not be like those children because they spoke badly. And I was taught deportment and ballet, and I played the harp, and I did embroidery. And I think my mother thought I was going to marry Mr. Darcy. I mean, I think she thought I'd marry some Victorian man who would totally appreciate that I was accomplished in these kinds of refined arts. (Adriana)

The *natural growth* families were spoken of with combinations of appreciation (for 'freedom' to develop 'authentically') and regret (for a lower inheritance of middle-class cultural capital). Alexander's family experience is a curious case in this regard. His own ideas about the *natural growth* approach of his family incorporate a desire

for knowledge. Alexander speaks here about his father, step-father, and step-brother, all manual labourers:

And they're men who you would think would fit every stereotype of this sort of uncouth working class man who lounge sit and watch television or whatever. But they both read voraciously. And they remind me of many men I've known in my life, working class men who either are deprived or chose not to pursue formal education, certainly at a tertiary level, but had the insatiable appetite for intellectual knowledge. (Alexander)

The importance of this is two-fold. First, it represents that, while categories such as *natural growth* and *concerted cultivation* are useful for discussing trends of experience, they have limited potential for understanding the phenomenological experiences of individuals and families. Alexander's family experience straddles class categories. He argues against the hegemonic notion that intellectual knowledge is the discursive property of the middle-class. His account does not diminish the social processes of power and exclusion at work in class; nor does it submit to an easy qualification of his experience. It serves as a reminder that the same may be said for the other interviewees, and all those who experience social class movement.

Curiosity and Intelligence

Intellectual curiosity played the early and important role for most of the interviewees of causing them to feel different from their families. The interviews were full of strong feelings about books, some claiming their young intellectual interest was what enabled them to make it through childhood. Curiosity and intelligence were characteristics they ascribed to their selves as children, constructing a narrative of class mobility in which they were *always already middle-class* (Lawler 1999). They construct narratives of class movement in which the 'real' self emerges only once they have realised their intellectual potentials. This location of the self in the past as a version of the present self lends continuity to narratives which are, and have been since their childhoods, stories of disrupted habitus and of negotiating incongruent patterns of class.

The topic of reading began to emerge from each interview and coalesce into metaphors for identity, inclusion and exclusion, and relationships with family. For those families in which reading was encouraged, the book shelves may have been sparse, or filled with a row of romance novels and westerns. The parents were not entirely able to connect with their children, but most recognised the importance of reading, like Vic's father who would wait outside of the library for him once a week while he selected books. Similarly, Christine prized the few books she did have, sent to her by a '*perhaps more cultured*' aunt as an occasional gift. Beyond satisfying curiosities, reading was the '*saving grace*' for most of the interviewees who used reading to placate a desire for escapism, acknowledging some discontent in, at times, fractured and difficult childhoods. '*I could get out of my life and get into someone else's. It was a great escape*', said Francesca, voicing the sentiment of most of the interviewees.

The coupling of narrating the self as always already middle-class, and the distancing and or exclusion from family is perhaps the most succinct portrayal of the disjointed and ambivalent nature of social class movement. Rachel's reply to the question – *Do you consider yourself an adaptive person?* – is exemplary of the other interviewees' experiences:

But I don't think it was adaptability as much as an embrace of a root that was there. Like when I say I was an obedient little student, clearly I could do it, and it was an escape from some of the horrible stuff too; as well as the curiosity. (Rachel)

The families, as described by many of the interviewees, were ambivalent about their child being, or at least seeming different. While the families were proud – if at times silent in their pride – they also had the propensity to downplay or even mock the 'bookishness' of their child. (*Your brain will burst if you keep reading*' Rachel's family told her). The resulting disconnect between family and self may have left its mark, but it was also the very thing which disposed the interviewees toward *embracing the root that was there*; embracing a different sense of self, which served

them later as they entered and tried to negotiate an identity of both working-class and middle-class.

Conclusion: *'Being able to put yourself in the other fellow's shoes'*

The negotiation of class movement required the successful use of self-reflexive, evaluative capacities. While each interviewee was emotionally involved with the inner-workings of their families, the majority of them suggested that their ability to analyse their family circumstances with objective insights enabled them to separate their own lives from the difficulties at home. They suggested, in differing ways, that their ability to think critically, and especially with empathy, from an early age enabled them to disentangle their family patterns, and/or problems, from their own identities. This ability to empathise, to understand different perspectives and positions, contributed to their abilities to adapt to situations and circumstances in order to make their own differences work in new social environments. Bourdieu writes:

The *habitus* which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class (Bourdieu 2002, p. 284).

This propensity-producing function of the habitus would appear to preclude the interviewees from a distancing from their working-class roots in terms of self-understanding and social disposition. However, this chapter has demonstrated that self-reflexive capacity of *empathy* was utilised to successfully negotiate new identities and social class environments. Like Christine, who learned from her mother about *'being able to put yourself in the other fellow's shoes'* - she drew from her past to construct and navigate her new life.

The ability to employ empathy as an evaluative mechanism was the reflexive process of negotiating class differences which accords with Bourdieu's notion of the

functioning of the habitus. This type of empathy and distancing of the self from the objective and relational circumstances offers an image of people who, though affected by their pasts, have the power of intention at work in their lives. Most of the interviewees talked about how their ability to understand other people actually enabled them to adapt to the expectations of others:

All behaviour is a symptom...And I think when I was younger, without having a framework or being able to put into words, I think there were times when I would step back and do that: 'well that's interesting'. That's not affecting me personally; I'm just interested in your behaviour now. I'm interested in what you've said. And I wouldn't say that, but I was conscious of that. (Francesca)

The chameleon-like adaptation enabled them to negotiate new social fields, but also posed a challenge to their identities: *'I've got quite good intuition. It's easy to meet people and work out what they are going to want to see. So, it's easy to forefront that and background other parts of yourself'* (Francesca).

Throughout their childhoods, most of the interviewees felt they were straddling two worlds: their working-class families and their emerging sense of self as already-other. This posed a problem in maintaining an integrated identity, and so they negotiated these disjointed identities, but not without loss and confusion. If negotiating such class incongruence is thought of as a skill, they would need to employ such mechanisms over again when they enter the social fields of higher education and professional and or managerial employment. The narratives of negotiating class differences are rooted in the family, as they carry a legacy and simultaneously create new ones.

Negotiating Education

A family may not be a sealed unit; but it is usually a closely-knit group which has an intense inner life and a reasonably stable organisation. Let us now turn to the impact of this inner life on the children's upbringing and schooling.

R. W. Connell, *Making the Difference* (1982, p. 73)

Only part of myself went to school. Part of myself I kept back. Then on weekends that part of myself had a great time [laugh]. Again, I always lead such a double life. (Francesca)

I suppose it was the fear of this drastic out-distancing of my father that had caused me, in my first years of college, to feel as though I were something like his double or his medium, emotionally to imagine that I was there at college on his behalf and that it wasn't just I who was being educated but he whom I was delivering from ignorance as well. Just the opposite was happening, of course: every book I underlined and marginally notated, every course I took and paper I wrote was expanding the mental divide that had been growing wider and wider between us....

Philip Roth, *Patrimony* (1991, p. 159-160)

Social class movement is a story of continually negotiating differing identities. The interviewees spent childhoods being both insiders and misfits in their families. When they entered university they faced social class and identity incongruence all over again. Educational institutions are places in which patterns of pedagogical authority reinforce the societal power dynamics of the middle and upper classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Schools and universities are social sites where the dynamics of class are clearly present, from the mundane interactions of students to the institutional structures. This chapter continues the narratives of those coming from working-class

families to find themselves in the middle-class institutions of higher education. Class cultural patterns in the family interact with those in the schools to form a complex social environment in which the interviewees make their lives.

This chapter examines the ways working-class students negotiate their identities and the pressures of middle-class social educational environments. It will be shown that this process is a matter of complex social and individual processes that involving *habitus dislocation*, which Baxter and Britton (2001, p. 99 cited earlier) define as, ‘a painful dislocation between an old and newly developing habitus, which are ranked hierarchically and carry connotations of inferiority and superiority’. The interviewees were confronted with daily reminders that they were from different backgrounds than their peers and were operating according to a different set of social rules, expectations, and practices. It will be shown that, in the process of negotiating this incongruence, their sense of self becomes fractured. However, the interviewees found ways to manage the dislocation and disjuncture in their identities, circumstances, and social relations. It will be demonstrated that the interviewees engage in their development as self-reflexive agents. As students they demonstrated, in the words of Diane Reay et al. (2009, p. 1105) ‘self-conscious reflexivity...in which self-awareness and a propensity for self-improvement become incorporated into the habitus’. This will help deepen our understanding of how late modern ideas of *individualisation* interact with social class processes. Self-reflexive identity construction and social class are not mutually exclusive, but are concurrent processes.

The journey toward successfully negotiating university began well before the interviewees arrived there. Part one of this chapter explores how processes of social class exclusion and inclusion begin in the family, through familial expectations and resources specifically related to education. *Emotional capital* (Reay 2005) in the form of confidence or a lack thereof, begins in the home. This section explores the experiences of public and private schooling, especially, what significance these have in terms of cultural and social capital. Part two is about the experience of habitus dislocation at university. The interviewees found that, compared to their middle-class peers, they had deficits of social, economic, and cultural capital – all of the resources which Bourdieu suggests serve to reproduce class differences over generations. This section examines the *hidden injuries* of these deficits and what strategies the

interviewees employ to mitigate the damages. Finally, part three demonstrates how the interviewees were able to find motivation and make meaning in order to manage their lives as outsiders in a different social environment.

Negotiating Family and School on the Long Path to University

They wanted me to leave school in fourth year, and I fought to stay on. [...] I worked in restaurants weekends and school holidays. I used to leave school after final exams and go and work in my mum's factory. I would always be kind of striding [between] worlds. But of course, at the factory who am I? I'm a little smart-ass kid who does well at school...Common story for people class crossing. Yeah, and not being welcomed anywhere, in one way. (Rachel)

Such experiences tend to produce a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities.

Pierre Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World* (1999, p. 511)

The difficult path to university began well before stepping foot onto a campus. University was not the inevitability it was for their middle-class peers, despite being top performing academic achievers in the state. Most of the interviewees were encouraged by their parents to train in a trade. All of their parents viewed university as a foreign place and most thought of it as a place which people from a working-class background do not have access to, or have a right to. Their parents' lack of access to higher education partially shaped their thoughts and feelings about, and their approach to attending university as first generation students. This section explores how processes of social exclusion were built into their working-class backgrounds.

The interviewees were all first generation university students (the first in their immediate families to attend and graduate). They faced the challenge of unfamiliarity

with the educational system, a disadvantage when facing stresses all university students confront. According to Aries and Seider (2005, p. 440), the challenges are most pronounced for first generation students, for they are, ‘...most lacking in cultural capital, who experience the greatest degree of inadequacy, inferiority and intimidation’. The interviewees’ lives demonstrate that these processes begin with the students’ parents’ understanding and interaction (or lack thereof) with the universities. Their parents carried with them the feelings of *inadequacy, inferiority and intimidation* (Aries and Seider 2005, p. 426) which had an impact on the students in question:

[University] was something they would have grown up thinking was not for them, something they didn’t have a right to become engaged with. And they weren’t good enough ...One of the real sad things about people who are denied access to something like education, it can create an animosity and an anger which results in a closing off of potential. (Alexander)

Alexander’s parents literally were denied. His father in particular, an Aboriginal Australian, was placed by the public schooling system, along with all other Aboriginal students, into one of the course streams for ‘slow learners’; a poignant illustration of how inequalities intersect. There were other interviewees whose parents missed educational opportunities due to issues of immigration and gender. Their parents viewed higher education as something beyond the reach not only of their capacities financially and in terms of confidence, but also their capabilities, or their actual ability to perform well enough. While their feelings of anger and animosity were regarding ‘*the closing off of potential*’, the parents nonetheless internalised the reality of their socio-structural circumstances, feeling that they were inferior and did not deserve to have an association with the likes of a university. Higher education became a foreign world to their parents, inaccessible and populated with supposedly superior people.

Due to disconnect with higher education, along with the logics of the material realities of wages and labour in Australia, most parents encouraged their children to pursue training in the trades. The admonishment: *the most important thing in life is to learn a trade* (Fred’s father) grows out of the logics of working-class situations. Their desire

for security, based on the potentials and constraints of their socio-economic circumstances influenced the counsel they offered their children:

I mean, he would have liked to have me get a trade. He thought that was equipping us to be successful or to be secure. (Andrew)

...Mum was particularly supportive of education, but she'd never been to high school herself. So, their horizons were fairly, well mum thought the best opportunity was a nurse. She always wanted to be a qualified nurse. She'd only been able to work as a nurse's aid. (Samantha)

There is also an element of responsibility built into working-class parental expectations. If it is responsible and secure to pursue training in a trade, then it is considered the path to maturity. Connell writes: 'For working-class kids, with a few exceptions, the path to adulthood lies out of the school and into the workforce' (1982, p. 75).

Some of the interviews indicated that parents also encouraged academic success along with qualification in a trade. The socio-economic and emotional gulf between their parents and higher education institutions meant that there were challenges when their children would enter university. Parents understood the value of a university education, but their expectations and reactions to their children going were ambivalent, ranging from suspicious and hesitant to indifferent. This ambivalence reflects the complexities of opportunity and constraint of their working-class families:

And growing up to get a trade, that was, you know you struck gold. And dad never pushed me, but mum was pressuring me about getting a trade. [...]. Mum would have been happy if I was a bricklayer, as long as it was a trade. Dad never sort of said, Joel, do this or don't do that. Dad was, you know, you do what you think is right and where you think you need to be. (Joel)

When parents wanted to urge their children toward university, they often did not know how. What can be seen as indifference though was interpreted as their parents'

lack of understanding and/or trust of the institutions and their processes. The interviewees felt frustration about this ambivalence, as well as, in some cases, the adamant objections about university:

I didn't get into a grammar school. And my father was disappointed about that. [...] My father was opposed to me sort of doing further study... he kind of thought it was time for me to get practical work experience. And the biggest job opportunity to him was more attractive than the university pathway. (Christine)

I told them that medicine at Melbourne was my first choice, and there was this sort of silence, and my mother said 'medicine, that's a doctor is it?' I said, yeah. She goes, 'well that would be good.' Yes, yes, she says, well, she said, 'Well, whatever happens that's fine'. You know, so they obviously liked the idea. (Vic)

The interviewees surpassed their parents' expectations by attending university. Most of their parents reacted with ambivalence toward their decisions about university. At the time, they experienced indifference from parents, but during the interview it was seen as their parents' reactions based on their own limitations and lack of exposure. These parents were making judgments based on the realities of their experiences, or lack thereof, with university. Surpassing their parents' expectations was confusing, but the interviewees felt pride as well.

No one out there had expectation for tertiary education. [...] My folks were pretty beat up sort of folks you know. I achieved well beyond their ambitions and expectations. (Fred)

They couldn't tell me anything, they said it was entirely your decision...that the children had to make their own decisions and live by their decisions, and they weren't going to decide for them. (Vic)

For class reasons, it wasn't expected of me that I would go on to further study beyond year 12. (Christine)

Despite their complex ambivalence toward university, most of the interviewees' parents were supportive of them attending once they made that decision. These working-class parents understood that there was some social value to getting a higher education degree, even if it did seem to them to involve a high level of risk.

Cultural patterns, embedded in working-class circumstances, persuade many working-class youth away from pursuing university qualification. The family possess a tacit and pernicious suspicion that they do not belong to the world of higher education, that they are not worthy or welcome to participate. However, when a person from a lower income family does make it to university, these same family patterns may be altered. The modifications experienced by some of the interviewees proved to set new expectations within their families, opening the doors to the world of education. The majority of the interviewees had at least one sibling attend university after them. As Alexander said, attending university '*shifted the sense in my family that university wasn't a place we could consider to a place that we could consider*'.

A common experience was that parents did not play a role in the shaping of an anticipated future; the long-term life planning which happens in middle class families (Lareau 2003). Notions of *career* were absent from most of their experiences:

I thought of a job, not a career. So um, uh, whereas people would think, oh I'll map out a plan for a career for the future, and those possibilities. I had no concept of a career. My parents had jobs. So, professional things were much more jobs. Also a doctor is one of the few professionals you had contact with in that sort of area. Because you went sick you went to the doctor. (Vic)

The additional disadvantages are enough to lead many working-class students away from a desire to attend university. Research has shown that, for those who do begin, the struggles are numerous, as are the responses. Many drop out soon after beginning, finding the experience of *habitus dislocation* too overwhelming even though they may be performing well academically (Lehmann 2007). Some of the interviewees did drop out of university but would have another attempt at it later on.

School Experiences: Public versus Private School

Family and schools are social sites where individuals encounter and negotiate cultural patterns. The interviews offer insight into the ways individuals experience the two social places, family and school, as they intersect and ‘create dilemmas, provide resources (or deny them), and suggest solutions’ (Connell 1982, p. 77) to the question of class movement. Performances in school were varied, as some were excellent students, ranking within the top five percent in the state for academic achievement, while others were poor performers at school, at times delinquent and disillusioned. Attendance at private versus public school was a topic of interest regarding opportunities or a lack thereof. Teachers’ influence played an equally important role on the path to university, though similar to the working-class students of Reay et al.’s research (2009), the overarching theme of the narratives was of self-reflexive, independent efforts toward improvement. For some of those who attended lower quality public schools, they attended the wrong school but had the right teachers. Through their experiences in school, processes of social inclusion and exclusion are seen to have potential for reinforcing class patterns, as well as affording opportunities for creative individual potential for overcoming obstacles of class disadvantage.

The matter of public versus private school attendance was presented in the interviews as being important. Which one they attended affected their experiences, and their perceptions of those experiences. Two of the eleven attended private secondary schools, and faced issues of social isolation and *habitus dislocation* common amongst working-class students in middle-class environments. The other interviewees would face such *habitus dislocation* later when they entered university.

The private school attendees, Adriana and Francesca, experienced class dislocation. Both managed to negotiate disjuncture with their school environment, but with emotional costs. Adriana, who said that she was ‘*given every opportunity to launch myself up the social ladder*’, felt that at private school she was a ‘dag’, meaning she stood out amongst her peers. She did not dress, speak, or behave like the popular, middle-class children at school despite, her parents’ extensive efforts to involve her in upper-middle class environments and training. Adriana was aware of looking different and felt excluded. The result was she had ‘*no social network whatsoever in my youth*’.

She felt isolated; a reversal of the processes of social *outsider* status experienced by most of the interviewees amongst their families.

While being a misfit at private school meant social exclusion, those who attended private schools also drew advantages from this status. Francesca, for example, believed her intellectual life inadvertently enhanced by her habit of cloistering herself within the library when able:

I started to have a secret life...I think I spent a couple of hours a day in the library right through primary school and secondary. I just really got into the library. The librarians loved me. Sometimes there were books you weren't allowed to borrow so I'd chuck them out the window and then bring them back when I was finished. (Francesca)

There is an intersection here of a cultural and religious nature, where she was allowed to go to the library instead of Hebrew and Biblical studies courses. She attended the Jewish private school where the man her mother cleaned for was a teacher. The result of this type of class (as well as religious) exclusion is to engender a sense of non-belonging, of being an intruder and not worthy of being a part of things. The rest of the interviewees attended public schools. Of those, some experienced exclusion from some of their middle-class peers. As high school students they imagined themselves doing things other than university. Material wealth difference was the point of encountering exclusion. This rejection by middle-class peers created an aversion to further exposure to such shaming:

I look back now and I can kind of see class differences. They were more confident. I'm thinking of a particular group of girls and a particular group of blokes.... I got bullied a fair bit at school, just because I was different. And I let it get to me. Self esteem again. [...] I remember hearing all those people going to university and thinking to myself, 'I'm so glad I'm not going to university, I don't have to deal with them again'. (Samantha)

I was doing well in high school, and teachers would ask 'where are you going?' I would still say things like, 'If I get into university'. They'd say,

‘what?!’ I never took for granted that I’d get into university, because you don’t. So, that’s a stark contrast with middle class people...I had all the evidence there, and I’d suffered enough. But I still didn’t think of myself as definitely going on to uni. (Rachel)

Amongst the interviewees who attended public schools, the idea of private school held significance. Some imagined how their lives would have been different had they been to private school. There was an awareness of differences in socialisation, cultural capital, and expectation between the two types of schooling experience. Joel missed the opportunity to attend private school, due to his father having an unanticipated ‘nervous breakdown’, and it affected his university career:

I strongly believe that had I gone to [name of private school], I would have gone through year 12 then went on to uni. I probably would have done law or accountancy...When you think about socially the two groups that you would have been with and expectations of friends...get a trade. (Joel)

The perceived deficits many had from attending public schools were, however, tempered by the advantages drawn from relation to particular teachers. These interviewees told stories of having the wrong school, but the right teachers. The social exclusion and experiences of being shamed in school were countered by the inclusive efforts of some teachers. Many of the interviewees recounted the important influence of teachers who recognised their talent and or interest in learning and who offered additional assistance toward their learning. These teachers played invaluable roles in moving them beyond the limiting expectations entrenched within their schools:

[I was] kind of tapped on the shoulder by a couple of teachers. ...What I might now call a mentor. You know, just somebody who I felt, I got on very well with, talked to, was encouraging. Class times I looked forward to more than the others ... I knew some friends who were really quite able, really quite able in their studies, who in the end of year 10 did not go onto years 11 and 12. Because one friend, her father just forbade her to go. So,

I guess, you know, those experiences with those teachers, led me to think, you know, led me to keep going in years 11 and 12. (Christine)

One teacher, when she found out I might not be able to stay at school because my parents wanted me to leave after four years instead of six. She wanted to make sure I won scholarship; she wanted to tutor me on the weekend [...] My dad used to kick me out of home...I used to have to go live with my brother and his wife.... Occasionally when I'd get to school late, people would find out that I'd had to leave home and stuff like that. And they all no doubt in the staff room said 'my god'. I didn't go around crying to them or anything, because you know, you're very proud. But that's a big deal, having to move away from home. But having the teachers there who wanted to make sure you got to uni. (Rachel)

[I] had fantastically supportive teachers. Because I think they knew that if you were doing well and you worked, they were really supportive...they would bend over backwards. And silly things like you wanted to get photocopies of past exam papers and you only have a certain amount of money. So you had to think about...you'd get the most recent ones and don't do the ones before. You'd start making those sort of choices. And you know, god bless those teachers. I remember this one teacher, he just rolled his eyes. And he said, [sigh], and the next day he came with, he gave me copies of everything. You know, um, he didn't give them to the rest though. (Vic)

Attentive teachers countered the lack of confidence and expectations of these working-class students. But these stories betray processes which serve to maintain social disadvantages. The interviewees understood, at the time of the interview, as well as when they were high school students, that most of the people from their high schools would not be attending university. Many of the interviewees spoke about their working-class peers, some more academically capable, who would not go on to attend university. Their predicted futures did not involve university:

I went to school with a lot of smart people. Academically smart, but because of our social position, their family background, the suburb we lived in, their future was already mapped out. Cause in school there are a lot of people smarter than me, and they went on and did nothing. (Joel)

Vic acknowledged that the teacher who helped him did not give the rest of the students the additional help. This betrays pedagogical processes which reproduce social inequalities through the habitual ‘missing’ of talent in the education systems.

The Long Path *after* School

The path to university was long and complex. Contrary to the middle class propensity to plan out life in full detail, these lives were geared toward indefinite plans. Nearly all worked before attending university, often procuring the same types of work their parents had. Several were considered ‘mature age’ students, not beginning university until their mid-twenties to late thirties. There were fits and starts, university drop outs, working for years before following the ambition to attend university, and for some, attending Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges. The long path to university was directly connected to their social class backgrounds and circumstances, as echoed by Rachel who said, *we [upwardly mobile] are ten years behind everyone else*. There was a pervasive sense amongst the interviewees that their backgrounds hobbled them regarding the time it took to achieve their ambitions. Their pre-university experiences, however, were also seen as advantageous in gaining some skills and competencies which were transferred to university and later professional work.

The *long path* was the result, for some of the interviewees, of not being strong academic performers in high school. Later at university, these same people would become top students. Part of the issue was lower expectation for academic performance built into their familial and educational environments. Paul Willis’ account of working-class high school boys (1977) demonstrated that poor school performance was in some ways advantageous to the ‘lads’ who were operating according to the logic of cultural patterns of opportunity and constraint they observed.

The interviewees of this thesis took individual responsibility for any poor school performance, but their stories similarly demonstrate the ways in which their behaviours were patterned responses to their socio-cultural circumstances. Alexander, for instance, said that he transitioned from a highly structured primary school run by the Christian Brothers to an unstructured high school environment where students were encouraged in self-learning. He became ‘*quite chaotic,*’ suddenly feeling alone, without home or social support structures. His neighbourhood environment was also chaotic, rife with crime and mistrust of police. An illustrative moment for him was standing against a wall as police searched he and his friends after catching them loitering. Alexander always carried a book with him, and the officer pulled the copy of Camus’ *The Stranger* out of Alexander’s back pocket in order to hit him over the head with it.

The majority of the interviewees were top academic performers, but several of them still had a long path to university. Andrew, Fred, and Alexander each went to ‘tech’, tertiary training school for the trades. They managed to use these experiences in their efforts toward university in unexpected ways:

[Tech] was a bit grittier. But we’d already created local networks in the secondary school ... Well; it was the poor school in town. They used to send the dumb kids to tech school. Cause you know they’re gonna be the labourers and trades people. The bright kids would be sent to private school, to Catholic school...So, when I got to secondary school I was actually sort of top grade, the top sort of levels of performance for most sort of basic subjects. So, they’d target those people and say we’re gonna turn you into proper college kids. (Andrew)

I always thought that I could do anything I want to do. That was from the tech school. Tech school, they taught you if you set your mind to something, you can do it. You want to build a house, you can build a house. I remember pulling a motor apart and putting it back together again. I couldn’t figure out why it wouldn’t work [laugh]. In a sense, you could try anything. (Fred)

They said their TAFE, post high school experiences built self-confidence which they drew from later at University. Andrew's experience as a top performer at TAFE meant the school singled him out for training to attend university.

Work experiences prior to university were mostly low-paying jobs, not unlike the labour that their parents did. The interviewees framed these experiences as both a delay to the university/career paths they would eventually take, as well as advantageous character building opportunities. Many cited a gain in confidence and willingness to do hard labour as assets which were transferred to use in later experiences in the middle-class institutions:

[I had] adversarial contact with trade unions and governments, so that I was doing things that were very intellectually challenging. Whether it be speaking to hundreds of men about a dispute, or reading up material to get on top of a dispute, or again, continuing with the reading of literature. By the time I got to the TAFE College at year 12, there was no sense I would be lacking in what was required to do the humanities. In fact, I was probably well prepared. (Alexander)

The years of delay before university, compared to their middle-class peers, were seen as a necessary burden of coming from working-class backgrounds. The interviewees felt that they had much 'catch-up' work to do. Some felt there were missed opportunities as a result. Others expressed relief that they had made it through those years to university at all, given the disadvantages they faced, both those they interacted with directly and the tacit cultural processes they were not aware of.

Being an Outsider *in* University

Though the path to university was, for most of the interviewees, an arduous and often confusing one, they did make it there. The surprises awaiting them were no less than experiences of insufficient personal (internal) and social resources. University, especially in the first couple of years, was difficult but manageable for some and

overwhelming for others. Bourdieu explains the reproduction of social patterns through processes involving three types of capital: economic, social, and cultural. Inequalities in the possession of these capitals produce social hierarchies which would seem to, however do not strictly, determine the social trajectories of the interviewees in this study. Their narratives show that, although they interact with social hierarchies of power in their university experiences, they do so in ways which demonstrate reflexive, determined, and active efforts to negotiate these processes. For their efforts, they dealt with the *hidden injuries* of being working-class students but also they found ways to successfully negotiate these challenges. This section examines the difficulties and *injuries* of lacking crucial economic, social, and cultural capitals.

Social and Cultural Capital Deficits

A common experience, especially amongst those who went to prestigious universities was an initial shock of exposure, the new environment like a splash into a pool of cold water in the way it both surprised and socially stunned. A similar finding by Reay et al. (2009) was called *the shock of the elite*, referring especially to the reactions of working-class students arriving in elite universities. Most of the interviewees of this thesis felt degrees of habitus dislocation due to a lack of social and cultural capital. They were particularly affected by the accompanying feelings of inadequacy and insufficiency:

I was really surprised when I got to university and all the students in medicine were going around, all comparing their marks and like, walking around like they owned the planet. (Vic)

I suddenly turned up and all these really confident, beautiful looking, eastern suburbs children who didn't even know where Footscray and Yarraville were... They were so socially confident. I mean, I had no social skills. (Adriana)

I just remember going along and thinking I just don't connect with them. I remember thinking oh, that sounds too hard. I just think I was still discovering who I was. (Samantha)

This shock of exposure was about the confidence of their peers compared to their own doubts about belonging, being capable, and or worthy, which they carried with them to university. One crux of Bourdieu's theory of social practice is that those who are brought up in social fields in which the cultural capital of the dominant fractions of society are learned, and become a part of the habitus, have the asset of confidence in thinking and behaving because those very mentalities and practices are a part of their habit producing dispositions. Class is reproduced, writes Skeggs, '...at the intimate level as a 'structure of feeling' in which doubt, anxiety and fear inform the production of subjectivity' (1997, p. 6). The middle and upper classes *walk around like they own the planet* because, in regards to the power inequalities of social class, they do. Social exclusion was happening in the form of a lack of social capital.

Disparity in social capital was about more than feeling difference and a lack of confidence. There were instances of direct 'othering' at play. They stood out because of accents they brought with them from working-class backgrounds. The resulting teasing and or ridicule from peers and authorities posed emotional, relational boundaries:

This old poncy anatomy professor comes up and says, 'It's good to see you boys'. Of course, there were a few girls there too. He called everybody boys. 'I wonder how many of you boys are from Wesley'. Then, he put it straight to me, 'And you lad, what school did you go to?' [Laugh] I said in this real ocker voice I used to have, 'Gully Tech' [Laugh]. He just ignored me, and he goes to the next one....Of course, everyone is killing themselves laughing. (Fred)

It was very much the haves and have nots. People used to laugh at the way I spoke. Yeah. Um, because uh, uh you know when [he puts on accent] *people in Broadmeadows all talk like this through their nose, and probably I spoke like that when I, you know, and when I went back to*

Broadmeadows, I'd go back to that straight away. Yeah, so you know, it tends to take over...moments of stress it comes back. [Laugh] (Vic)

Markers of class culture such as language formed social boundaries which hindered other social interactions. Some interviewees dealt with snobbery and deliberate exclusion from social clubs and activities:

I built myself a little sailing dingy when I was 17. So, I thought I'd join the sailing club. So, I rocked up, joined the sailing club, signed my name. They said we meet every Saturday afternoon. [...] So, I rock up and they say, 'oh, well you can watch' [laugh]. Then they said, 'we're having sailing weekend at Gippsland lakes'. I said, 'oh, can I come?' They said, 'well, no' [laugh]. (Fred)

The intersections of class and gender, ethnicity, and sexuality amplified and complicated processes of social exclusion. Adriana, for example, faced ridicule from peers for being a woman and from a Greek family:

I got into the law student society and I remember they circulated a leaflet right through the Union building.... It said: relative height of Adriana to a coffee table and you know. Then, all these signs in the law student society office – *Where are Adriana's tits?* and stuff. (Adriana)

Vic spoke about difficulty reconciling his identity as a gay man given the intense emotional, psychological and even physical breakdowns suffered at points during his university years due to his class background:

I basically did not have an early adulthood. I um, I don't mind talking about this, I wasn't sexually active till I was 25...I'm gay, and I didn't come out till I was 25, 26.... Um, it's funny like, people say what was it like being gay and coming out and that sort of stuff? I'm thinking that was the least of my problems. I was just concerned with surviving university. For me, it was basically living with this background, and entering into, I don't like using the word class- you probably notice I don't use the word

working class and middle class when I'm talking. I don't believe in that sort of thing. Um, uh, but the um, I spent some time just trying to get around this notion of rich and poor, and privilege and not privilege and the impact upon my health and that sort of stuff. (Vic)

Many of the interviewees felt shame and a sense of listless, ungrounded placement in social space. Their narratives emphasised the sense of being an impostor. They wrestled with thoughts of somehow having cheated the system, of getting by and always being at risk of being found out to be lacking. They doubted their own abilities, even though they had already seen results which indicated they were top performers. Charlesworth describes the working-class disenfranchised sense of being as 'the invisibility of lacking an identity invested with a value recognised by others' (2000, p. 93). Internal displacement within a middle-class social field caused them to doubt their own abilities. As impostors, they felt that the universities had made a mistake in allowing them to participate. Even those who were the highest achieving students needed regular reassurance that they deserved to be a part of things, and felt that their status as university students was a fluke. They carried with them a fear of being found out as phoney. This anxiety about being an undeserving, and at times unwelcome, participant in the life of the community was a part of the tacit process of class:

[My professor] suggested to me that I could go on to do honours, and if I liked, he could supervise me. I remember thinking, I remember saying to him, *me? Honours, really?* Do you think I could? [Laugh] Just this sort of surprise, you know. (Christine)

I'd done HSC and all that, and I'd done remarkably well. [...] I had the validation that the state education system said that you're in the top 2% or whatever of the state, so you can go anywhere you want. [...] But, the day I walked in here as a student, I had this...I felt sick. And thinking, I'm gonna get found out. That, in some way that I'd bluffed my way through. That I didn't feel validated. (Alexander)

Economic Capital Deficits

There were a number of financial issues the interviewees had to deal with at university. Financial constraints were not a direct hindrance to attending university. Most of them were the beneficiaries of a period in Australia where university education was supplemented entirely by the federal government. Others attended later thanks to the HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) government loan program. It was a close margin for some, however, as with Lachlan who was attending university and was about to have to drop out for financial reasons, when legislation was to provide full cover of tuition fees. Their lack of financial resources interfered for some who were required to work during university holidays and or during the semesters. Most of the interviewees worked during school holidays and or during the semesters to support themselves. The career-oriented opportunities missed as a result of having to work, when some of their peers might be taking advantage of developing important connections through internships and volunteer work, is a particular concern (Lehmann 2009).

The greatest impact of financial disparities was to reinforce interviewees' place in the social order. Cultural practices only available to those with the financial resources made this especially clear. This was a problematic issue of moral values differentiation when financial constraints became a matter of social exclusion:

It was quite acute, my experience being in a different class. [...] I'm thinking about when one of the girls...she was a wealthy Jewish girl whose father had given her basically an unlimited income you know...So, I couldn't do all the things that they could do. I couldn't go out to dinner. I couldn't go to the places that they went. And she was really quite rude about it. One day I just said to her, I don't have an inheritance you know, and my parents work.[...] But it became very abundantly obvious to me at that time that I didn't go to Portsea for holidays and I didn't know the rich kids on that side of town. And I didn't have the life that they did, and I didn't have the clothes... (Adriana)

I remember this guy... walk in and really good looking guy. I was this huge chubby thing; unkempt and speaking through his nose. And he was speaking really slowly and he said '*oh I'm so hung over*'. And going on about what he did all night. Then goes, oh I come home, and I can remember his words, '*oh I stacked the oldies Volvo*'. Stacked is slang for a car collision...And he was just laughing. And I'm thinking: it was just this affluence. (Vic)

Though excluded socially, the interviewees found that they were accepted based on academic merit. The fact that they were allowed into the university made most say in the interviews that they conceive of themselves as beneficiaries of 'meritocracy', though with caveats about a lack of social inclusion:

I think Australia is a country of a fair go....I talked funny, I worked hard, and I felt that I had a fair go. They said, you know, you can come to the club but you can't sail the yachts. You can't come to our parties, but his medicine's okay....If you want to join the Melbourne Cricket Club or something, that's different [laugh]. That's *no go* [laugh]. (Fred)

Well people would sponsor you, become patrons, or want to see you succeed. It's that working class boy made good stuff....Had similar sorts of backgrounds and had become lecturers. [...] I do it myself today. I see people who you have more of a concern for people who have come from a more rural background, for them to do well. [...] If you could deliver, you know. It's no good being working class boy made good if you don't perform. (Andrew)

The interviewees were acutely aware that they lacked the knowledge and confidence which seemed prevalent all around them amongst the students from the middle classes. Much of this insecurity came from a lack of cultural capital. They understood this to be a disadvantage of social class, which helped to alleviate some of the negative emotional impact but did not change the reality of disadvantage:

They know how it works. Because you know, ‘*my father does medicine or my cousin does that*’. They know that after your third year you chose a hospital. So, I knew nothing of that. [...] I had to rely on written documentation. I had none of that family tradition, that goes...medicine is actually a very, there’s quite a lot families that do medicine, their children do it. You know...a lot of medical dynasty type families. (Vic)

I found university very challenging in lots of ways. You know, I didn’t have a father who was a lawyer who would come home and speak about it; it didn’t come naturally to me. I didn’t understand. I remember going into my contracts class. The lecturer said, day one, we’re starting with remedies. I was like what the fuck are remedies? What? I didn’t even know, like: contract, offer acceptance, contract breaks need a remedy. I couldn’t put the pieces together. In lots of ways I was way too young and inexperienced to do a law degree. (Adriana)

Presumably, the other students in Adriana’s class would also be finding it challenging to learn the new material. However, she recognised that her lack of exposure put her at a disadvantage; her anxiety unmitigated by cultural capital.

Making Meaning Out of the Past, for the Present

The interviewees made it work; they successfully, each in various ways, negotiated their way through university despite the challenges of being working-class outsiders in middle-class institutions. To understand their ability to successfully negotiate not only their social environment, but also the disruptions and developments of their identities, it is necessary to observe the motivations at work in their efforts. The dual needs of wanting to be ordinary and needing to be extraordinary are exemplary of the complexity of their motivations. The motivations for making it work were not the straightforward material drives associated with the upwardly mobile. Their narratives of negotiating habitus dislocation contain themes of satisfying their curiosities, finding meaning and dignity, and of self-reflexive construction of identity.

While low self-esteem and insecurity was an Achilles heel, most of the interviewees talked about having little doubt that they would finish university, despite the many setbacks:

Now, when I said that I'm going to finish this course, I didn't have to give myself a motivating talk. I just said, well, I'll go and I'll finish this and then I'll decide what to do. I believed that I could do that. I didn't for one moment doubt that I could do it. I worked out the terms and conditions, made them objective, realistic, and achievable, but if I didn't believe that I could do it, I wouldn't have done it. (Vic)

Part of this confidence came from a sense of determination to fulfil curiosities and desires to learn. Most of the interviewees saw themselves as designers of their futures. They often felt stern resolve, saying things in the interviews like: '*...I would never have once thought to give up...*' (Adriana). The following passages reflect the type of *project of the self* supposed to be characteristic of late modern identity, but with a clear influence of social class movement:

But I remember being accepted to do this course and uh, and getting a letter about it, and kind of going on campus to enrol like the other students were doing, and feeling so proud that I was walking through a university campus and I could be part of it. You know, it was just something that I had wanted to do and I was curious about. (Christine)

[A supervisor] said, you know, just go get a job at a bank, something safe. This is a bit too adventurous for you. That made me determined I was going to bloody pass. (Lachlan)

...I think a big factor in this decision to change or veer towards academic study and leave work...was my mother died in that period. ...I think I was just looking for more meaningful sort of work, you know...of greater value. (Christine)

The search for significance in the eyes of others marked the narratives and was a dominant theme in the interviews. As a motivator for pressing themselves to negotiate the difficulties of class movement at university, the need for validation was the strongest one. They were involved in continual manoeuvring between acknowledgement at home and at school and university. The desire to feel significant, to be valued, often caused confusion between the different measures of worth in their social worlds. The desire was a powerful motivator toward academic achievement:

I know my main thing was wanting to belong. I know it was important for me to come top of the class...I would say that what had a really big effect that goes through life is that I totally wanted to be accepted and ordinary and at the same time it was absolutely important that I was extraordinary. I think those things don't sit that well together. I didn't want to be an intellectual. I didn't want to stand out. (Rachel)

I was told I would amount to nothing if I didn't do math and science, and that my head mistress's husband and son were both barristers. [...] And that's what I could get to if I had done math and science. And so I said, what do I need to get into law? She said, well you need a language. I said, well fine, I'll do one. I did Indonesian. From then on, for the better part of twenty years '*I'll show them*' was my mantra. [...] So, then I got second highest marks in the school and got into law. I was only one of three students who got into Melbourne [University]. (Adriana)

I couldn't bear the thought of being average, or being in the middle. It just didn't sit well for me. (Joel)

Given deficits in social, economic, and cultural capital, there was no doubt successful negotiation of university required hard work. The interviewees all expressed having to and or wanting to work exceptionally hard at their university experiences. Even those who performed poorly in high school upped their efforts and employed high levels of sacrifice and self-discipline to accomplish their work as university students. They made sacrifices and had levels of self-discipline beyond the levels expected of university students with fewer obstacles. This cost them at the level of having limited

time and social options, but they spoke with pride about their sacrifices and great work efforts. It was also a point of pride that they had to, for the most part - accomplish these things with minimal support. Their lives were projects which held more reward in their memories for having had additional challenges:

I wouldn't do sport because I wanted to study. I organised study groups on weekends and holidays. The only time I had off was Sunday night. I'd study all weekend except for Sunday night. I absolutely just went flat out.
(Fred)

Just, that cultural thing was just so hard to deal with, just the sheer volume. It was all so new to me, and I had no guideposts, no rudder, I had to basically you know um, problems would come up all day every day. I spent most of my time just problem solving, working out ways to getting at things. You know, just ways to work out time tables, and planning to make sure stuff was done the next day. I got into very routine habits you know. Saturday morning, I'd be doing housecleaning with mum. Sunday was always study anatomy. ...Sunday night I had that off, watching television. All day Monday was dissection. So, I had this routine. It was the only way I could get through. So, I had to work out everything myself. I had no curriculum, no one to tell me how to pace it. (Vic)

Conclusion: Dislocation and the Rules of the Game

The sense of having to figure things out on one's own was most prevalent in the stories of discovering that they were outsiders in an alternate system. Most felt out of place but managed to successfully negotiate their student lives by coming to understand that there were systems in place which their middle-class peers seemed very adept at using. The interviewees consciously learned and used the systems or ways of being able to work around them (though, not in the natural way of the middle class). Bourdieu favours the metaphor of class habitus as *a feel for the game* (1984). The interviewees learned that their circumstance of class dislocation could be

managed by learning the rules of the game. They credited their ability to learn and adapt (eventually) as key to successfully negotiating class differences:

It does take the ability to look outside yourself... appreciate that people do behave in certain ways. [...] The thing is if you can adapt to particular institutional and social situations... paths are made much easier. So, whilst I still had some anxieties about certain sorts of social situations that doesn't mean I can't survive... it's not about being a chameleon, it's about recognising there are different codes in different situations. (Andrew)

I used to hear people talking about... their parents would know everything about the system, because they'd all been through them. And they had this mentoring approach and stuff, and I had absolutely no mentoring.... If you come from a background... [...] This concept of being mentored or systems and that sort of stuff, you either understand it or you don't. If you don't understand it, it doesn't matter what systems that are in place, they're not going to be accessed, so they might as well not exist. [...] If you don't perceive it, then, see I knew they were there as words on paper or intellectually, but I wasn't convinced they were there. There's a difference between believing something there and something being airy fairy. You know, some people get scholarships but that's not for me. (Vic)

The financial opportunities missed by a lack of knowledge of these *systems* could be quite costly. Conversely, discovering and *believing* in them opened doors to opportunity for all of the interviewees, which they began to utilise during university and beyond in their working lives. Similarly, the effort to adopt the cultural capital of the middle class was a conscious effort. They understood that to be successful, they would need to adopt the cultural practices of their peers. And they desired to do so:

The more you mix with people at that level, the more you're likely to acquire the same tastes or whatever. I mean, I knew that I wanted to be interested in other things as well. But it's a bit of conscious work to do that. (Lachlan)

As Lehmann suggests (2009), the ultimate goal of the working-class students is to become middle-class. While they do not desire to reject their pasts (rather, to escape them), they actually think of themselves as already and becoming middle-class. They began to be able to negotiate their habitus dislocation by thinking of the middle-class environment as an alternate system with rules which could be learned and adapted to. The interviewees continued to negotiate this complex identity as they moved beyond university and into careers and, for some, beginning families of their own.

Negotiating Work

It's about feeling at home, feeling in your skin...feeling safe. People, in their bones, tend to know more about where they feel at home. (Rachel)

Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, at the very core of your being.

Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*
(1995, p. 98)

The path to university was long and fraught with difficulties of class inequality, as the last chapter demonstrated. But the particular nature of these routes played a role in the development, to varying degrees, of middle-class habitus. So far, it has been seen that the interviews contain threads of the narrative of *becoming* middle-class while *remaining* working-class, in the family and in experiences of higher education. This chapter continues to explore this dynamic coupling of classed identities as the interviewees advanced into their post-university years of career work. Herein are stories of leaving university and negotiating the social fields of middle-class work.

None of the interviewees' accounts suggest that their working-class and middle-class conceptions of self are entirely reconciled. However, their narratives demonstrated that, with age and career experience, they became more comfortable with their dualities, and better able to bring coherence to their conception of self. This chapter aims to demonstrate how experiences of work were important to the interviewees in their *classed projects of the self*. They negotiated ambivalent feelings and, at times, fraught circumstances, with a level of self-reflexivity and relational ingenuity which made it possible to progress in middle-class work environments even when they felt like outsiders. It will be shown how the identities inscribed on them from their working-class pasts, even negative ones, were in some cases used to make life work, as they, in Vic's words, *walk in-between* differing class cultures.

The first section of the chapter examines the interviewees' early work experiences. It explores how the interviewees' early work histories demonstrate the complexity of working-class dispositions influencing the development of middle-class habitus. The section – *middle-class social disjuncture* – deals with the interviewees' experiences of finding that their patterns of thinking and or social practices were incongruent with those of the professional workplaces they inhabited. These included such things as differing types and levels of diversity, values, and manners and tastes. The third section – *disjuncture in the workplace* – is about the ways that class-cultures seemed to clash in the workplace. The interviewees found it difficult, at times, to understand and or appreciate the ways that their work environments functioned. This ranged from critiques of underhanded political relations to nepotism. There were also, however, difficulties the interviewees faced within their conceptions of self; for example, finding it difficult to think of oneself as a *professional*, and the distinction it entails. The fourth section – *identity and reconciling class cultures within the self* – analyses the fore-mentioned experiences to decipher the ways the interviewees managed to negotiate their environments and identities. The chapter conclusion discusses the creative potential of class habitus, and what it means to the construction of identity for those who experience the continual flux of differing class identities.

Early Work Experiences

The interviewees' early work often involved blue-collar labour similar to their parents'. In some ways, this put them at a disadvantage compared to university peers who may have had career-starting unpaid internships, or perhaps could focus more attention on studies without having to work. However, these experiences, as well as early professional work, provided opportunity to develop capacities which would later help them negotiate middle-class culture. These capacities include social, cultural, as well as emotional capital found, or better, made, in surprising ways.

Necessity led all of the interviewees to experience work similar to the labour of their parents. The overwhelming sentiment about that work was dissatisfaction. There was

discontent with the nature of the work as well as the limited economic opportunity it afforded. Additionally, physical hazards and their inherent risks to personal and family security caused stress. The greatest dissatisfaction, though, was the way these jobs resulted in feelings of lack of challenge and limitation in the ability to exercise intellectual curiosities and capacities. Inequality in risk and opportunity were viewed, not only as things to be avoided, but as things which *could* be avoided through conscious planning. These feelings spurred action to take their lives in different directions, away from blue-collar work:

I trained as a paramedic....I was actually burned out after 10 years. There were a couple of times where I almost got killed. [...] And I got a commendation from the police commissioner. And I thought a lot of bloody good that does, it's not gonna put food on the table for a family. So, left and that's when I went to uni. (Joel)

I knew that nursing didn't fit with me, that I wasn't particularly practical....nursing is much more black and white; you know the correct technique or you don't. Whereas, research is much more point of view, and interpreting, and questioning constantly. Nursing- the mindset is that there's particular knowledge and you practice that. (Samantha)

However much they wanted to avoid a lifetime of blue-collar work, the interviewees told stories of having gained from time spent in either working-class labour and or apprentice professional work. They viewed these experiences, in hindsight, as integral steps toward their later careers. The interviewees demonstrated self-reflexive agency as described by the individualisation thesis, in which people, 'relatively independently of their class status, assess their social environments to arrive at decisions that are best suited to their own biographical projects' (Lehmann 2009, p. 635). Though, similar to Lehmann's working-class university students, the interviewees offer 'individualisation narratives that are profoundly shaped by social class' (2009, p. 636).

The following accounts demonstrate the progressions of *classed projects of the self*, as working-class individuals gain the all-important emotional capital, confidence,

through practical experience. The story tellers present themselves ambivalently; as *already having* and *acquiring* this capital. The ambivalence enables them to negotiate the indignity inscribed on their working-class identities, and to recognise that their working-class identities were important elements of their later lives. It is a demonstration of successful reconciliation of two different social narratives of class into one life of social class movement:

I really wanted to do surgery, being sort of a tradie at heart. [...] I actually had this mechanical view of people [...] Those days you just go to Guinea and just do [surgery]. Or even out in the country. I remember being out in [name of country town] and doing a breach delivery. You couldn't do that in Melbourne now. I actually had a textbook open describing how to do it. There was no sense that you couldn't do it. I was imbued with an over confidence in my own ability [laugh]. (Fred)

When I was in the army they wanted me to become an officer. ...People say, you know, I'm a leader. [...] I think being in the army and being a paramedic- you've got to be a leader. You can't start sucking your thumb and think what are we going to do next? You've actually got to make decisions and be bold. [...] So, I guess that those skills have been developed over the years. And they were formative years in adulthood. (Joel)

Confidence is a resource the interviewees spoke at length about, usually regarding how much more of it their middle-class peers had. They did gain this valuable asset though, in earlier experiences, and employ it in unfamiliar middle-class fields. Superiors and supervisors in their work experiences played roles in convincing them that they were capable of more than they thought. At times, the growth and benefits went unrecognised, even during the interviews:

I was doing temp work then, office work. I ended up managing that restaurant. So, it was a good experience. Um, and then I did a course in pattern making. I got a job in the rag trade. You know, I'd worked in that factory packing t-shirts. Oh, I forgot, they actually promoted me from the

factory floor up to the office. I ended up working in production control, production planning. So, I worked for an employment agency, which is interesting. The ironic thing is that I ended up being the word processing supervisor, which is hilarious cause I didn't know how to use a computer, doing the things people working for me had to do. I ended up being made the London supervisor of the year and sent to Detroit to shake hands with all the supervisors over there. (Francesca)

When I pointed out to Francesca that it was interesting there was a pattern of promotions, she said that she had not realised that before. Many of the interviewees' working-class experiences were framed as narratives of self-discovery and of developing characteristics which they claim to have as adults. They took advantage of opportunities for promotion and advanced work experience, at times more and less consciously creating paths through effort and attitude. Habitus is seen as a conservative force, reproducing social class by way of the internalisation of possibilities of *what could be* based on experiences of *what has been*. As Swartz writes, '[habitus] tends to generate practices whose consequences it anticipates from previous experience rather than those it believes will best correspond to the opportunities and the constraints imposed by the situation in which it operates' (2002, p. 67S). However, individual agency enables the manipulation of habitus toward a change in practice and subsequent changes in circumstances. Bourdieu suggests (cited in Swartz 2002, p. 66) that individuals are 'never more than a deviation' from their base of tacit, class-cultural knowledge. These class movement narratives suggest that the cultural processes of habitus which reproduce social class may also be negotiated in such ways as to enable class hybridity (Lucey et al. 2003).

Middle-Class World Disjuncture

The interviewees' interactions with the various aspects of middle-class life were at times awkward, distressing, and damaging. Becoming middle class was for most a continual discomfort. The habitus disruption experienced at university mitigated later cultural disruption, but did not eliminate it. Moving into middle-class work was a

move into unfamiliar social fields, with different class cultural ways of thinking and behaving. For most, the transition into middle-class work was presented as an escape from working-class labour. It was, however, an escape into uncharted cultural territory, which was presented as both a flourishing of the self, and as an uncomfortable encounter with an 'other' class. Their stories demonstrate the discomfort and disjuncture encountered, as well as the capacity to successfully negotiate the perceived pros and cons of new social fields.

One of the primary gripes most the interviewees had about middle-class fields was their perceived insular nature, with a lack of cultural diversity. This was experienced as both intimidating and bland. The interviewees spoke of dissatisfaction with a lack of community interest and social flavour:

[Middle-class suburbs are] just so fucking white bread, it annoys me. When I come out of there I'm like this [she tenses her whole body]. [...] Different people; you know, immigrants, junkies, chardonnay drinking liberals, small l, whatever we're supposed to be. It's more of a mix anyway. I think it's like going to Disneyland out there. There's no Asian people...there's no poor people. (Francesca)

Well, it's blonde...predominantly. And there're lots of *wives*. And they're, you know, they have *children*, and they don't work. And they're supported by their husbands who are either footballers or CEOs. They're all in clubs, have you know, um, golden retrievers...very expensive houses. I really struggle in that sort of environment. I like a bit of colour and movement. I like some ethnic people around me. I like you know, Sudanese and Ethiopians and Turks. And you know, having said that, after being here for three and a half years, I've sort of adjusted and made my life here. But I carry bizarrely, I think, a notion of, a real arrogance about who I am. I think because I've just had to fight so damn hard to assert it. (Adriana)

Threads of ambivalence run throughout the interviews. Here again, in Adriana's account, there are indications of both a rejection of a particular middle-class environment yet also a distinct pride in being a part of it. The interviewees must

continually balance the critiques of their old habitus (which they still inhabit) and their desire to be an integrated part of middle-class social fields. It is a balancing act of maintaining ambition in light of differing class measures of dignity.

Those who experienced milder degrees of *misfit* in their middle-class work environments still recognised themselves and were recognised by others as outsiders. The differentiation was entailed in cultural signifiers:

Because of the way the academy can avoid it a bit, it hasn't been this thing I've run into as an obstacle. I still have, you know, certain sort of discomfort around really wealthy people, or people who are very well spoken and all those sorts of things. In certain sorts of social settings, I find myself a bit uncomfortable, not sure about my manners or minding my Ps and Qs, or worrying that I'll fucking swear or something [laugh]. Use the wrong fork at a dinner. [...] If I look for it I can see it the way it's imprinted on people and it's presumably imprinted on me in ways that I don't recognise. (Andrew)

'Social class', writes Lehmann (2009, p. 634), 'is implied in our lay normative, responses to the social interactions, processes, and institutions we encounter, which also determine how we value ourselves and others and, ultimately, how we form dispositions for agency'. As in Andrew's passage above, being a misfit in some social situations does not necessarily lead to doubt about self-worth. Nevertheless, the discomfort of being unsure regarding the appropriateness of social behaviour points to the way working-class practice positions one to feel they are the 'other'.

Moral discourses of consumerism and material value were matters of taste distinction which made the interviewees uncomfortable about middle class culture. There was distaste for what Bourdieu refers to as the 'awkward pretension of the middle class' (Swartz 2002, p. 65S). For example, Samantha spoke of feeling a cringe for the material obsession of her peers in a 'new mother's group':

I didn't fit with that group. [...] we have different values and interests.
...It's very geared toward consumerism. I'm not trying to put myself up as

an angel who's not part of the whole thing. One of my friends put it very well; it was just after the tsunami in Southeast Asia. She went to her mother's group the next day and said, 'oh my god have you heard about this'. And no one wanted to talk about anything except the values and merits of different washing machines, and how some made less noise than others. You can say oh, that's okay, they have different values. But when you're up against it, and you want to get along with these people, especially when you have a young baby, you feel like there's a lot hanging on getting along with these people. (Samantha)

Most of the interviewees did not feel they were in positions to reject the perceived elements of middle-class habitus which they disliked, for they had a stake in being accepted as aspiring middle-class. The mechanisms of class were at play within them. They simultaneously had to defend, within themselves, their sense of self as both working and middle class. It was common amongst them to view themselves as having competing loyalties. It became difficult when they felt they were trying to defend integrity to a self as compartmentalised or drawn from two different classed selves. The following excerpt from Rachel's interview exemplifies this internal struggle, as she confronts perceived injustice in particular bureaucratic decisions made within the university she taught at:

And I speak up not just because I have courage, but the number of people who really like and want you to do it are phenomenal. [Some say]: 'don't change. Don't change your personality. Don't change what you do' [laugh]. Whereas other people in the hierarchies, who are really into power, have said things like, 'what you're saying is a complete libellous thing against such and such an office'. [...] And on that occasion, I actually did shed tears. But I was really quite pleased to just still sit there. And the person didn't know what to say. The muscles on [their] face worked very hard, because [they] didn't have a clue what to do. I see that as very much middle class sort of polite....violence going on because people hold their tongues. Don't tell me that people that bash each other up because they're drunk...don't tell me they're more violent than people who do violence and deprive people of livelihoods. (Rachel)

The interviewees did not want to inhabit all of the dispositions of the middle-class fields they entered. However, they saw themselves as middle class. Lawler found a similar dichotomy amongst her upwardly mobile interviewees (1999). What differs in the interview findings of this thesis is a deliberate and conscious rejection of discourses of cultural value hierarchies, which compliment the tacit signifiers of discomfort and distaste. The experience of social mobility led to understanding and critique of hierarchical patterns of cultural value. The following passage from Vic is exemplary of such recognition. He was asked whether he feels comfortably integrated amongst his middle class peers, socially and at work:

Sometimes I don't...some friends will talk about the book reviews they read in the papers. But I don't read the review, I'll read the book [laugh], make up my own mind. Um, and there's a certain sort of discourse that goes on...about what's acceptable culture and what isn't. See like I, I love classical music. I've done that type, but I've done folk music, I've done pop stuff. And to me it's all music. [...] I've also sung Schonberg. I love bluegrass, and uh, I play Scottish fiddle. I'm learning classical viola. I play classical guitar, you know. So, I did all that as an adult too. I did all my music as an adult. I could never afford music. As soon as I became independent, started earning, I could get singing lessons, piano lessons, those are suddenly options. (Vic)

The critique of '*discourses...about what's acceptable culture and what isn't*' is an analysis of the social sorting mechanisms of class. The interviewees often placed themselves outside the fray; they presented themselves as having discovered and transgressed those mechanisms.

Disjuncture in the workplace

The feeling of dislocation – of being working-class in middle-class fields – was prevalent in experiences in the workplace. The issue of confidence follows them from

university into the workplace: *I remember being terrified about working; what the hell would I do?*, said Lachlan. The mere idea of the professional work world was intimidating as an unknown place inhabited by unfamiliar people. The issue of navigating social relations at work was a point of confusion and frustration for most of the interviewees. Work relations were also a source of learning and continuing on the narrative path of *becoming* middle-class. They did not yet, if ever, entirely inhabit the middle-class culture in which they were expected to perform as professionals. 'You know that if you pretend to be something else,' writes Annette Kuhn, 'if you try to act as if you were one of the entitled, you risk exposure and humiliation' (1995, pp. 97-98).

What was seen as an indirect confrontational approach in the middle-class workplace was met with distrust by many of the interviewees. The interviewees struggled to learn and understand the indirect approach of their middle-class colleagues. Such indirect relating was seen, at times, as secretive and dishonest. This perception, and often misconception, had roots in differing class backgrounds. Alexander, for example, discussed having to learn to negotiate the dichotomies of the public versus the private self:

It's an animosity towards authority, which comes out of literally being tutored in a real animosity towards police. [...] So, it was a very anti-authoritarian streak which in some ways I've never been able to get rid of, and wouldn't want to. So, I perform very badly here in the executive [part of] the school. I was head of discipline for creative writing. And when we were going through a restructure last year and the dean would send another rambling rant down, I'd say oh, this is fucking ridiculous, this is fucked; it doesn't make sense. [...] What I think is interesting about language and class: you learn in this environment, don't be direct. Don't necessarily say what you think. There's a lot of masking. A lot of what people say in a polite, structured institutional environment is not what they actually mean. And you know, it works at a bureaucratic level, where they say one thing to you and [say] 'fuck you' behind your back. I've found that difficult to cope with. (Alexander)

I know there are people who believe they were born to rule...who think that *if I could run the world it would be the right kind of world*; that whole idea of class assumption being built into their body and way of talking. And I am like a street fighter who does a suicide mission. I will not serve. I will not go down. (Rachel)

Such negative interaction with authority, from teachers to police, (ranging from distrust to disdain), led some of the interviewees to harbour a general mistrust of authority which played a disruptive role in their careers. In regards to social integration and trust, Mark Peel writes:

In some of the recent writing on citizens' apathy and alienation, political scientists such as American Robert Putnam emphasise what is called 'social capital': the shared associations that need to be nurtured if people are to feel they are part of a larger community from which they draw benefits and to which they owe responsibilities. But for people living in hardship, feelings of being distrusted by an uncaring and punitive system are the basis of their social capital. Their experiences pull them together by pushing away strangers, do-gooders and governments. (2003, p. 96)

The difficulties of trying to become middle-class are amplified when there is a collective affinity with working-class background *against* a perceived harsh and unfair authority structure amongst the ruling classes.

Communication and language entail patterns of social class difference wrought with the hierarchical assignment of lesser and greater worth (Charlesworth 2000). So, when the interviewees had difficulty learning to speak in a *professional* manner, they dealt with feelings of insufficiency and inferiority. Most told of having difficulty knowing how to speak with authority. Cross-class communication proved challenging and, at times, to be a work relational barrier:

I found it a struggle working at the research centre, just not having that speaking professionally and speaking professionally with other people. That was really hard. That was something I learned. I learned it with time.

Just knowing even how to interact with authority figures, like the director. Whereas, I looked at a lovely woman who I'll never forget working with. She'd had a quite privileged background. [...] She's just lovely because she's just, she has a lot of integrity; she's very open-minded. I look back at the way she interacted with say the director, kind of was much more comfortable in that interacting with people who are senior. [...] Her particular background is...Indian Malaysian. And I bring that up just because you know people will have a picture in their head. [...] I don't think it was a race thing. Maybe, well she came from quite a privileged background herself. (Samantha)

The formality of bureaucratic workplaces was foreign, bringing feelings of alienation. Most reported feeling 'not at home' amongst such formalised social relational structures. It was seen as adversarial to the work they wanted to accomplish. As Rachel stated: *Never underestimate that thing with class: that coldness of the more individualised, atomised- competition with other people- can have a real alien-ness to it.* Distancing the self from the middle-class because of cultural discrepancies made the journey of upward class movement especially difficult to undertake. Namely, it was a challenge for some of the interviewees to even conceptualise themselves according to monikers of middle-class distinction, and it shaped the way they navigated their careers:

I lived a relatively informed life, I just didn't think of myself as someone who would ever be a lecturer or anything. [...] I only allowed myself at 30 plus to think of myself as an intellectual and accept it; that it's not a bad thing. [...] At the same time...never having some of the middle class thing of having a career path. (Rachel)

The internal, tacit dynamics of class distinction also played into issues of open discrimination based on class. A number of the interviewees believed they were disadvantaged by class nepotism. Those in the fields of medicine and law were especially susceptible to it, while those in academia were less so. The repercussions were felt in the form of exclusion from job opportunities. For some, like Fred, it meant never fulfilling career aspirations:

I missed out on getting a surgery training position. You can tell I'm a bit bitter about that. Not having the right dad. I don't know, maybe I just wasn't good enough. But anyway, didn't get it. [...] The thing is more about the specialties. They're really jobs for the boys. Probably still are. You know, if your father knows someone else that has a job there, you'll get the job. Those trained positions are completely undemocratic. It wasn't based on who was the best student. It's a very much in club, medicine in Melbourne. All of us working class guys all became GPs because there really wasn't much else we could do. (Fred)

Class nepotism was substantially worse for those who suffered sex discrimination as well. Patterns of gender and power were felt in the discrimination faced by some of the women interviewed:

...If you don't want to be in the race for power, people want you to trail behind with the oranges and orange juice. [...] I have an example of that here with some fairly nice people, of actually giving, giving, giving, because I love disseminating stuff. And if I know resources I want to hand it on. And then learning that some people thought you were a bit of suck up. You think I'm an idiot and not just a generous person. [...] So, it's almost with females that thing of coming back to if you are generous and care about others, why is that mistaken for wanting to be...treated as secondary? (Rachel)

Some of the interviewees had especially shocking encounters with sex discrimination. In all cases, the processes involve subtle (or blatant) suggestions of lesser moral worth. The degradation to self-worth is the *hidden injury* of inequality which makes sex discrimination, as with class discrimination, a powerfully negative social force:

I stayed at that firm for 9 years, and endured any manner of abuse from the man who was my boss, who was also a complete sexist pig who was utterly inappropriate in all manner of ways with all female staff. You know, to the point of saying to me, 'I would never fuck you, you're not

fuckable'. He actually said that...and then that created a whole other layer of not-good-enough for me. [...] What that was in a subtle way was...a way of actually putting the women down, because of course they were the sluts. And the men would be doing high fives because they'd managed to fuck them, you know. It was this hideous environment in which to work. So, I don't have particularly fond memories of [name of law firm].

(Adriana)

These intersecting social inequalities (Walby 2007) are further complicated by mechanisms of ethnic discrimination. Alexander and Adriana, in particular, felt the effects of having their ethnicity play a role in their careers. Adriana is offered here again as an example due to the nature of the complexity of three intersecting social inequalities:

I applied to I think 120 law firms. And, I didn't get a single interview. And I know that some of my friends, whose fathers were lawyers and whose fathers knew people, or whose mothers knew people, was generally the fathers though, had all got interviews and offered jobs. And my marks were better than theirs. So, I started to ring a couple of firms and say, why didn't I get an interview, and um, this coming from a naïve base rather than from an assertive, you know, standing up for my rights. And then it kind of hit me, wow, this is about me being Greek and having an unpronounceable name. And even when I got the job, I got a job at [name of law firm], finally through friends of friends who got me an interview, um, even when I got the job there, my boss wanted me to change my name because they couldn't put it on the letter head as Adriana ----- . And at the time I was married to Nathan Rowe [pseudonym]. They said 'can you change it to Adriana Rowe?' And I said, 'no, I can't. My name is Adriana -----'. (Adriana)

Not at Home in Either Class Culture

The issue of discomfort never left most of the interviewees. They were not entirely at home in their middle-class career fields. Similarly, they told narratives of growing older and growing farther apart from their working-class origins. For most, there was continued and increasing disjuncture between them and their families. The interviewees lived with a sense of disconnect from both worlds; a part of both but not fully inhabiting either. As with Lawler's class mobile interviewees, 'neither the working-class nor the middle-class self can be completely constituted within a narrative in which the beginning leads inexorably to the end' (1999, p. 17).

I do think: *what am I doing in the same fucking room talking this language with this person?* I have nothing in common with them. However....I'm not at all at home with talking about...made up stories about celebrities. That couldn't be my world; people talking to each other on the phone about dogs getting married. That couldn't be my world either. So, I'm a walking contradiction that way too. (Rachel)

The same issues the interviewees had regarding middle-class culture were a two-sided coin. They had travelled from their working-class roots but whenever they encountered them, they recognised the changes in their own habitus. The public versus private dynamics of class were a prominent example. While the private nature of middle-class social relations were, at times, perceived as underhanded, the public nature of working-class relations was seen to have its own drawbacks:

... I have very strong memories of women being beaten up by their husbands, in hotels, and along Gertrude Street where all the pubs were. And...very little or no intervention from other men. [...] It was accepted to the extent that people would regard that, when it was in a public place, as a private matter. You know, that's the contradiction of it. It was on display, but people would just turn their head. [...] I think that the strongest effect it has on me is not to romanticise being working class. And, I think that the most negative effect it has had on me is until

probably ten years ago, probably my own suspicion of men. [...] I couldn't point to a single male role model as someone who was formative. (Alexander)

Their differences from family, related to changes in habitus, brought feelings of guilt for many of the interviewees. These separations from family entail a reverse pathologization of the interviewees' families, be it unintentional. 'The habitus not only classifies phenomena but *values* them, as the expressions "ill-disposed" and "well-disposed" suggest', writes Andrew Sayer (2005b, p. 35). To become different, to even feel different, caused most of the interviews to confront the idea that they may have abandoned their families. The fulfilment of upward social aspirations come with the risk of disloyalty, when family loyalty was, according to most of the interviewees, one of, if not the most, important value learned growing up:

I've never felt threatened about going back, but I'm wondering if you don't just get so busy, and um...well, professionally you change. [...] [My family] hadn't changed at all; I'd just changed so much. And you know, to ah, don't get me wrong, you change and you know, when you do different things, you're learning and doing different things, learning and getting more educated, as I said earlier on, the grey becomes bigger, the black and white [becomes less]. (Joel)

The degree of separation was a hindrance to relating to family, though not necessarily a severe disruption. There was at a minimum, a lack of understanding, as with Alexander, who said: *In my family I'm the butt of any joke to do with intellectual pursuits*. For some though, the changes brought a saddening severance of family ties:

[My brothers] are still intimidated...working class drinking boys. My younger brother still feels an incredible inferiority towards me. I basically have no contact with him. And um, I've tried...but the main thing about it is that I'm like a person from another planet, no matter how nice I am. [...] I know we share human substance, but on another level the strength of that intimidation and those feelings of inferiority. It really played out in twisted and vicious ways. A lot of that's happened with my family, so I'm

internally wounded by my brother not being able to love me. I've sort of sent him things, and he's two years younger, I can't really ring him more because it's horrible. (Rachel)

Sennett and Cobb (Sennett and Cobb 1972) argue that class is so effectively reproduced because all people, from field hand to neurosurgeon, are subject to the same social mechanisms of hierarchically ascribed respect. The interviewees and their families all face this powerful (for being internalised) cultural message:

Failures and *static* people...are seen as having undeveloped personalities; the uncomfortable feelings about those who do not 'make something of themselves' when they have a chance, come out of an assumption there can be respect only as they become in some way distinctive, as they stand out from the mass. (Sennett and Cobb 1972, p. 183, emphasis added)

The interviews told of another type of family disjuncture: class differences between the interviewees and their spouses. Of the interviewees with life partners, most were married or de facto partner to another with middle-class family backgrounds. The differences experienced were not presented as in any way detrimental to the relationships. However, their class differences showed up in the occasional argument.

My wife, who's very seriously middle class, when we were first going out together, she said, 'you tell people too much about yourself'. (Alexander)

My husband's definitely from a working class background. ...With my father and my brother and my husband's family, there's a point at which we can't talk about what it is that I do and why I've done it. [...] I've sort of jumped a class here. (Christine)

Some of the things we've clashed about are class-based. [...] She still talks about high school all the time. She sees high school, that school network stuff is ongoing. [...] And how people are dressed....She's looking at someone and saying, 'look, just no class'. I'm going, 'that's just so snobby'. And she's, 'I'm not a snob.' You know, there are parts of

suburbs that are bogan-ish that she finds very depressing. And I just think *so what?* They're just working class suburbs. And on the other side of it, I probably, you know, some of my behaviour... just not particularly well mannered. Occasionally, it just drives her up the wall [laugh]. (Andrew)

Anxieties about class cultural differences were also projected on the children of the interviewees. The necessity of straddling social class is not shared by the children, who do not have to negotiate those differences:

You know, we pay for the education because we both feel that in some ways ours has been lacking. [...] There's a part of me which has the problem with that of elitism that goes with being the private school situation. Even though for other parents it's quite normal, you know, it's particularly privileged. ...That ethos is not there with him, because he's having it pretty easy in a way, you know, that we're paying for this. (Christine)

The interviewees betrayed concern as to whether their children would retain, what they perceive to be, the best of both class worlds. Their class movement is something immaterial to their children, a story of the past. The deepest worry of the socially mobile, writes Richard Sennett, 'is that [they] cannot offer the substance of [their] work life as an example to [their] children of how they should conduct themselves ethically' (1998, p. 21). Some of the children interact with grandparents and other relatives, requiring them to negotiate different classed relations. However, they maintain a distance from their parents', the interviewees', life experiences of social class movement.

Identity and Reconciling Class Cultures (Within the Self)

I think I'm always going to have this kind of bizarre and uncomfortable duality. But...if I can kind of make them at least move in the same direction, you know [laugh]. (Adriana)

Negotiating social class movement, and the story of loss, is perhaps most strongly indicated in the negotiation of the straddler's identity. Where do the interviewees feel at home? Where are they able to *be in their own skin*? And is it possible to have a whole sense of self, or are the socially mobile bound to dualistic and dislocated identities? The interviews provide an answer which seems, at first glance, at odds with the findings of other qualitative research about upward social mobility. This section will explore the ways the interviewees negotiated their apparently dualistic identities. While their narratives are those of conflicting class identities, it will be argued that their narratives also demonstrate a reconciliation of identity.

It is clear by now that identity confusion abounds for the upwardly mobile. The quest to understand the self will likely continue throughout their lives. Questions of belonging stay with them: *Am I validated here* [at university as a lecturer]? *But also, do I want to be? And that's probably the real inner tension. Do I really want to be validated here?* (Alexander). The interviewees walk an *emotional tightrope* (Reay 2005, p. 921), followed by their 'choice to both move away and become different to the natal family [which] can evoke powerful feelings of anxiety, loss, guilt and fear alongside the more accepted emotional responses of hopeful anticipation, excitement and pride'. Their task then, was to make it work; to learn to maintain their own moral worth and dignity in light of an emotional and socio-structural tug-of-war.

The experience of interacting with the middle and upper classes opened doors to understanding other ways of being, as well as of the self. It is a simple but important point: by placing themselves in middle-class environments, they were able to glean important elements of social, cultural, and emotional capital. For example, Alexander's experience as a lecturer:

In my teaching, I've had sometimes quite aggressive young men, and the way that I have dealt with them more than *what the fuck are you doing*, it's usually not my first response. It's ways that I've learned from being a teacher, which are about, to get them onside. Usually, if I have those silly young men, I wait till they've said something helpful, I say look that's a really good point. And try and turn them around. So, I would have to say that being an academic, one of the things I've learned, I suppose skills of um, diplomacy, which I didn't have. (Alexander)

Exposure to middle- and upper-class environments, a much longer stretch for one with a working-class background, also provided opportunity to see the moral worth of those who are usually considered a distant other. Francesca spoke of accompanying her husband to high dollar social events related to his work:

Usually once we're seated and I've managed to talk to the person next to me, and it's okay, I'm just talking to another human being, and getting to know them, and that's fine. But often the thought of going to something like that makes me twitchy. Or these Christmas deals; people all in black looking very austere and haughty. [...] But most people, when you scratch the surface, there's good and bad in all of us. You just have to look for the good. (Francesca)

It is important to note in the above passages that Alexander and Francesca postured themselves to receive and understand the people they worked and/or socialised with. Social class dynamics often hinder such cross-class cultural understanding. However, the interviewees each offered myriad stories which demonstrated their willingness and capacity to be open to the class 'other', despite cultural cringes and anxieties. I asked each interviewee whether they think of themselves as *an adaptable person*. Their answers were illustrative attempts at empathetic understanding:

I've been able to pick up that there are structures and codes and ways of doing things. I think some people would find places like this intimidating and exclusive [university]. ...For me it's been the opposite experience,

because I think the code is fairly open and ready to be seen. [...] Stop talking the way you used to when you were in the country. Don't say *cunt* in front of women, you know. It's just these sorts of things that you just learn about. You learn and *ultimately you take them on and believe in them yourself*. I don't think the same way I used to when I was living in the country. My political sensibilities have changed, and I've become more middle class in my political stance, ethics, and outlook on life. And that's just because I'm just assimilating the norms of the situation I'm living in. But those are just things I could see straight away. (Andrew, emphasis added)

Most of the interviewees worked, volunteered, or socialised with one or more persons who they considered middle class mentors. Their open posturing meant they were willing to learn different ways of thinking and behaving. Lachlan and Samantha, for example, both had an early mentor in their work situations:

He just created his own systems. He just made stuff up, and it seemed to work. He would create syndicates of art. Buy art, double the price, put it in the syndicate, sell it, and everyone makes money. How does that work? [...] Coming from the upbringing I had...you work hard, you earn your 20 dollars, you save 10 of that 20, and then you can go buy something. [...] That was reshaping thinking in some ways. (Lachlan)

When I was at the research centre, I struggled...I didn't have those ways of interacting with professionals. But there was one particular woman was a bit of a role model there in terms of that. [...] I guess, one of the things, she was very middle class. But she never kind of made you feel...she was just very open-minded. (Samantha)

The *uncomfortable dualities* of class movement can be negotiated, and, as Adriana put it, *moved in the same direction*. The interviewees were influenced by, but not bound by, their social origins. Their lives demonstrate that the establishment of class identity is not fixed, but is in regular flux and regular need of conscious maintenance of self-

equilibrium. Arresting elements of the interview narratives were the interviewees' discussions of learning that they did not have to be *everything to everyone*:

I think one of the things I personally had to learn as I grew older, is to stop trying to be everything to everyone; to stop trying to be a chameleon. Cause I think I'm a fabulous chameleon. I could be whatever anyone wants me to be: If they want me to be smart and witty, if they want me to be careful and listening, if they want me to be funny or coarse or silly. [...] I think I've got quite good intuition. It's easy to meet people and work out what...they are going to want to see. So, it's easy to forefront that and background other parts of yourself. (Francesca)

The dualistic *forefront* and *backgrounding* of the self is the thing they eventually learned to stop doing, with lesser and greater degrees of success. Most became adept at deciding which 'parts' of themselves they felt to be authentic. Though, it should be noted that the fear of being found to be inauthentic or 'pretentious' (Lawler 1999, p. 17) was never too far away for a number of the interviewees. Finding dignity in their work and lives was a keystone factor of maintaining this assurance in their hybrid identities:

Well, I suppose taking a run down business and making it a success is particularly gratifying. It was going broke, and we started to get a couple of significant contracts. That was very, very satisfying. To be managing director or CEO or whatever of that business, and it's your business, *does improve your sense of self worth*, I suppose, in terms of being successful. It did make a big difference. (Lachlan, italics added)

Likewise, Alexander found validation in the writing and publishing of a collection of short stories about the working-class suburb he grew up in, and in teaching creative writing to young students from similar demographics:

Well, I think that it validated their childhoods for instance, it validated their story, it validates their experience. I think to see versions of their life in print, it's saying well, our story is worth writing about as well. [...] I

think the worst thing you can do to young people is not validate their story, or not to allow them to validate it. You know, and it's one of the things that middle-class people take for granted, that you have interest in their story, and you want to listen to it, and you want to read about it. And, often, it's not that interesting, and they get a shock, that you don't see it as that interesting. So, they don't have to question that. (Alexander)

The telling of stories validates the storyteller, giving voice to the nuances of that life. Interestingly, the interviews had this in common: their work was at least in part focused on bringing a voice and validity to others who are disenfranchised and often disregarded. Francesca worked as a case manager for homeless people in Melbourne. Lachlan and Adriana both did pro bono legal work through a Melbourne charity. Samantha, Rachel, Christine, Andrew, and Alexander each spoke at length about reaching working-class students who struggled as they did. Joel took pride in mentoring aspiring business people who would not normally be given the benefit of the doubt. Fred and Vic both did medical practice in areas of Melbourne with large working-class and underprivileged demographics. Validating the worth of the disenfranchised was an integral aspect of the interviewees themselves finding validation in their work:

It's an advantage, because, when I've worked in areas where there have been poor people or drug affected people, sometimes it might be kids I went to school with [...] I think that experience of that background has really affected the way I work. I feel comfortable working with all...I know some of my colleagues would say terrible things...*there's a bogan there*. They'd be quite a nice person, it's just the way they talk, or they don't have the opportunities that the doctors had. [...] I would give it back and say, well that's just inappropriate. That's a real person. And they'd just think you're a bit weird, a bit aggro or something. But I didn't care. (Vic)

A lot of people think, oh well, I'm so different from those people, I'm nothing like them. I'd like to say to them, well, you bloody are [laugh]. There's an awful lot in common. It's how you choose to see it. (Francesca)

Conclusion: Rendering Back Something Different

The narratives of work examined in this chapter illustrate the creative potential of the habitus. The interviewees are not simply products of their social circumstances, nor simply class-free carvers of their own destinies. Social class is a discussion of potentials and constraints, and the tacit processes which accompany them. Jackson describes the importance of considering the influence a person has on their own destiny, within social constraints:

...What is possible for a person is always preconditioned by the world into which he or she is born and raised, but a person's life does more than conserve and perpetuate these pre-existing circumstances; it interprets them, negotiates and nuances them, re-imagines them, protests against them, and endures them in such complex and subtle ways that, in the end, human freedom appears as "the small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him" (Jackson 1995, p. 30).

The analysis presented in this thesis is about the *rendering back of something different*. It is about the small, and sometimes larger, movements within and between class cultures. This chapter, along with the *Family* and *Education* chapters, illustrates that class habitus is a powerful socially reproductive force, but is subject to individualised movements. The next chapter turns now to a final meditation on what conclusions may be drawn from the glimpses we have had into the experience of social mobility.

Conclusion: Dislocated Identity and Class-Hybridity

Being an outsider...gives you permission to do what you want. You don't belong to that world, and you don't belong to this world. [...]
Basically what's really out there is a blank slate to write upon. (Vic)

This thesis tells a story of the inheritance of class. The eleven upwardly mobile people interviewed never found themselves comfortably situated in their social worlds, past or present – though they continually tried to be. Their working-class backgrounds influenced their middle-class adult lives in profound ways. This chapter concludes the story with an examination of meanings and implications which the whole-life narratives herein – through family, education, and work – have for the study of class mobility. Many working-class families want socio-economic success for their daughters and sons, but not the relational disruption of having them leave their family origins. To distance oneself from the class-culture of the family is to, by varying degrees, alienate oneself from the family. It is also to fulfil some of the hopes of the family, and the ambitions of a material society. Class is, as Reay writes (2005, p. 924), 'deeply embedded in everyday interactions and institutional processes, in the struggle for identity and recognition; whether it is acknowledged or not'. That embodiment is fraught with ambivalence for the upwardly mobile. Class is embedded, for them, in the struggle to make a new life and to salvage the bonds of the old one. That is their inheritance of class for the upwardly mobile.

Class mobility entails continual re-negotiation and re-synthesis of differing class habitus and identities. This concluding chapter discusses what the *processes of negotiation*, as presented in previous chapters, suggest about the experience of and conceptions of class mobility. The discussion explores the conclusions which may be drawn about class mobility, recognising the limitations of a small qualitative project. The chapter examines this research's implications for notions of habitus as a socially reproductive force. It also discusses how the subtle distribution of social respect

influences the lives of the socially mobile, as well as how class identity is perhaps more congruent with theories of late modern identity than suggested by individualisation theorists. The chapter considers the value of viewing the interviewees' stories of family, education, and employment *in the round*, for class mobility research. Attention is here redirected to questions posed at the outset: How have the interviewees managed to reconcile differing classed identities and relationships? And at what cost, and to what gain? We turn now to the discussion of *reconciliation*.

The thesis examined the interviewees' attempts to reconcile these differing class-cultural identities. Their selfhood is divided and their life stories demonstrate the great lengths they went to try and make those differing parts of the self, as Adriana said, *move in the same direction*. In Barack Obama's autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, he writes of his negotiation of differing racial backgrounds:

I learned to skip back and forth between my black and white worlds, understanding that each possessed its own language and customs and structures of meaning, convinced that with a bit of translation on my part the two worlds, would eventually cohere (Obama 2004, p. 82).

The interviewees conducted their own translating in the hopes of bringing their class worlds into alignment – with their differing language, customs and structures of meaning. What Obama refers to here are elements of the habitus. The work of the habitus is to reproduce social structures through the naturalisation of cultural practices: 'And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product', write Bourdieu and Wacquant (cited in Reay et al. 2009, p. 1105), 'it is like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted'. *Common sense* within a social group may be common only to that group, as with some elements of classed patterns of thinking. What happens when a person embodies contradicting *common sense*? How does one cope with competing cultural understandings and practices?

The interviewees experienced this competing sense of self, within the self, as well as between the self and others. Dispositions of the habitus adapt to new environments

according to the logics of that habitus. The interviewees, as a result of such processes, often changed, or refashioned themselves self-consciously. Other research (such as John Friedmann's (2005) work on upward mobility and habitus, suggests that adapting to a new habitus entails jettisoning the prior one. This thesis suggests that something else more complex is at work. The interviewees preserved important elements of what they considered their working-class self. Beyond this, they even made valuable use of their sense of working-class identity to negotiate middle-class environments.

The habitus works to reproduce social structures through patterns of culture. If this were not true, then perhaps the interviewees' lives would have been easier. It must be recognised though, that the habitus is a structural force of power relations only insofar as it is negotiated and enacted by individuals, who, though subject to these tacit forces, have the ability to resist, interpret, and creatively modify them. The capacity for individual resistance is always limited, especially against *unseen* power structures. However, if *class habitus* research is to add depth of understanding to the phenomenon of social mobility, then the habitus must be understood for its creative potential for change as much as for its propensity to replicate. Throughout their lives, the interviewees managed, with varying degrees of success, to be both working and middle class. They engaged the middle-class social world with their working-class selves. The habitus allows for, rephrasing Obama's words, *a bit of translation for coherence between two worlds*.

There is an important link between two of the ideas central to this thesis. The first of these ideas is that class processes entail unequal distribution of social *respect*, or *dignity*, and the *hidden injuries of class*. The second idea is that late-modern identity is individualised, based on self-conscious reflexivity – *projects of the self*. This thesis has demonstrated that, with the first idea, there are *hidden injuries of class* distinctive to the experience of social mobility. It has also been shown that the interviewees consciously participated in their own life narratives, what I refer to as *classed* projects of the self. This section maps the connections between these ideas as they intersect in the lives of the upwardly mobile.

The shift toward emphasising cultural mechanisms of social class has brought recent research focused on moral boundary drawing (Lamont 2000; Lehmann 2009; Reay 2005; Sayer 2005a). Social class groups assume characteristics and qualities for themselves which they recognise as universally applicable (Sayer 2005a) and presume they and not the ‘other’ classes have a monopoly on these qualities. Diane Reay created an emotional taxonomy of class, believed to represent the boundaries classes draw against each other (2005). The discovery of this thesis is that those who experience social class mobility draw a moral advantage, which they presume to set them apart from the other social classes.

The need for reconciling class perspectives and identities within the self was what led the interviewees to tell narratives of being both affected by class, yet having become free of class cultural constraints. The individualisation thesis imagines that late modernity has positioned people to be authors of their own fate, less defined by socio-economic and other social constraints (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This thesis argues that class identity does matter to the extent it influences individual lives through economic and psychological/emotional opportunities and constraints. The surprising thing, though, is the *way* that straddling class worlds shaped identity. The interviewees were each asked: *Do you ever feel any sort of pull between those two worlds [social classes]?* Vic’s reply was indicative of the attitudes of most of the interviewees:

No, I feel like I’ve left the one behind. But I don’t think I’ve joined the other one. I feel like I walk in-between. I actually see that as a good thing. Because I’ve done so many different things and that uh, I see people really locked into this script that they have. What they do, particularly the people who went to university, the so-called middle class. You do this and you do that, you practice. They always seem to be locked into this script. And because I never had the life script to start...I always look at various sorts of things, you know like when I went to Germany for a month on a scholarship. Last year I finished a fellowship in research into Scottish music in Australia. Went to the national folk festival. Recorded music and various sorts of things. And

my colleagues sometimes think I, they consider that as real work. And, I put a lot of time into that [laugh]. (Vic)

This passage is a claim on a degree of autonomy which Vic supposes is available to him *because* of his working class roots. If there were a hierarchy of capacities for late-modern self-made selfhood, the above description would be near the top. The interviewees wanted recognition of their working-class pasts *and* their middle-class present. *Dignity* was not always forthcoming to people who often felt like outsiders in both class worlds. However, the interviewees seemed to find dignity in a third place: in their dual classed identities, walking in-between two worlds. They drew moral advantages from this social positioning. If independence and self-authorship (or at least the perception of having such) is a middle-class cultural capital, then most of the interviewees indicate in their narratives that their struggles have given them a vantage point inaccessible to those who are locked into social *scripts*. This great degree of autonomy and self-determination, whether real or imagined, is an indication of the moral boundary drawing mechanisms of social class, as played out in the lives of upwardly mobile Australians. The following passage further illustrates Vic's perspective of his situation:

Being an outsider...gives you permission to do what you want. [...]
You don't belong to that world, and you don't belong to this world.
[...] But it means you don't have those rules. So you've got the ability to choose a lot more. I think that issue of being outside is actually, it's sort of like, um, uh, if you're on the edge of two worlds, you can see them both. But you don't belong to either of them. So, that is, and you start to recognise the boundaries of those worlds. And at the same time you recognise that they are only boundaries, and they are often artificial, that they are social. Basically what's really out there is a blank slate to write upon. (Vic)

Anthony Giddens wrote of identity that: 'A person's identity is (found)...in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going' (Giddens 1991, p. 54). In the ongoing effort to manage dislocated selves, the interviewees created alternative narratives of selfhood; stories in which they were situated with a view from outside the fray, above

the scene, and subject to the rules in a more objective way. This is coupled with the reality of difficulties, including rejections, embarrassment, and shame. There are still degrees of class disempowerment in their lives, but they have overcome some of it, partially through their deliberate interpretative engagement with it. Part of reconciling differing class identities was to produce and maintain a narrative in which the self was more autonomous, better able to self-consciously construct the self, *because* of these injuries and the perspective they wrought – in-between worlds.

The work of this thesis goes a small but important way toward addressing a gap in the literature on class mobility. There is little qualitative, social mobility research which takes into account the scope of, or the narrative of, the whole life-course, from childhood, through school and higher education, and into adult working years. That is, as stated at the outset, the point where this thesis aims to further culturalist class-mobility research. The narratives examined in this thesis are stories of the creative potential of the habitus. These interviewees are not simply products of their social circumstances, nor simply class-free carvers of their own destinies. Then how *did* they carry out their lives? How *did* they negotiate life between two worlds? The author hopes that by now it is clear: the answer to these questions lies in the *whole* life narrative; in every complex manoeuvring of life and the use which the individual makes of memory.

Consider again this excerpt of Seamus Heaney's poem, *Digging*:

....

By God, the old man could handle a spade,
Just like his old man.

....

The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

The interviewees inherited their parents' habitus, but they worked with different tools. Like Heaney digging with a pen, they negotiated their middle-class lives with the

inheritance of working-class habitus. Adriana spoke well for all of the interviewees and their experience negotiating differing social classes, when she said, as already quoted:

I think I'm always going to have this kind of bizarre and uncomfortable duality. But...if I can kind of make them at least move in the same direction, you know [laugh]. (Adriana)

They did manage to *make them move in the same direction* – to reconcile the past and the present. Novelist, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., once said that a successful story must have characters who want something, even if it is simply a glass of water. What did the interviewees want? Throughout their lives they wanted recognition – to find dignity in their differences. It is my hope that this rendering of their lives honours their struggle; that the reader may see the dignity in being both working- and middle-class Australian.

Appendix I Short Descriptions of the Interviewees

Adriana is 44 and has one sibling, her brother. She was brought up by Greek migrant parents who ran a small-appliance repair shop out of the garage of their home in a working-class suburb. She has had a career as a lawyer after receiving her law degree from Melbourne University. She and her partner now live in an affluent Melbourne suburb. She does pro-bono law work for a charity organisation.

Alexander is 51 and has five siblings. His parents are Australian, of diverse ethnic origin, including Irish, Maltese, Punjab, German, and Aboriginal Australian, among others. He says, 'It's a complex mix, but not to me'. His parents both did various types of low-wage, manual work. He was brought up in a working-class suburb – the subject of much of the academic and literary writing he now does as a creative writing lecturer. He and his partner have six children and live in an inner-city suburb.

Andrew is 44 and he and his eight siblings were raised by Irish-Australian parents in the country town of Victoria. His parents both worked as labourers in factories. He is an anthropology lecturer at a suburban University in Melbourne. He and his partner live in a Melbourne suburb with their children.

Christine is 48 and was brought up in Tasmania by parents who migrated from England when Christine was 12. She studied at Melbourne University and is now a university lecturer teaching. She worked as a reporter at a major Melbourne newspaper for over ten years before deciding to follow her dream of going to university. She and her partner live in a Melbourne suburb with their two children.

Francesca is 48 and was brought up by her mother in the home of a wealthy Melbourne family. Her mother worked as the family's live-in maid. She and her mother also spent short periods of time homeless, living out of a car. Francesca did a university degree in social sciences and now works as a case manager for an organisation assisting homeless people. She and her partner live in Melbourne with their two children.

Fred is 59 and was brought up with his brother and sister by working-class parents in regional Victoria. He studied medicine at Melbourne University and is now a medical practitioner. He and his partner live in a Melbourne suburb with their children. He is long-distance bicyclist, travelling to participate in rides the length of countries.

Joel is 52 and was brought up in Tasmania with his two siblings. His parents did various working-class jobs. He did a degree in business and now works as a manager of human resources for a multi-national corporation. His work has him travelling much of the time between his home and the rest of the country. He and his partner travel together when they can and encourage their two children as they now pursue careers.

Lachlan is 53 and was raised by working-class parents in a working-class suburb east of Melbourne. He received a university degree and has become a successful business owner. He and his partner live in Melbourne. He credits time spent in the UK with an eccentric drama stage manager as the key to his success – learning to negotiate seemingly impossible situations.

Rachel is 59 and was raised with her two brothers in New South Wales. Her parents did various types of working-class labour. She received her university degree and is now a university lecturer. She has two adult children and she lives in a lively Melbourne suburb where she practices her French with a local café owner.

Samantha is in her late thirties and was brought up with her brother and sister by working-class parents. Her mother encouraged her to become a nurse, and she did, and worked at it until she realised her true ambition was within academia. She now works as a university researcher, lecturing in research methods. She and her partner live with their two children.

Vic is in his mid forties and was brought up with eight brothers and sisters in a working-class suburb. His parents did various types of working-class labour. He studied medicine at Melbourne University and is now a medical practitioner and educator, authoring and editing GP curriculum. He grew up in a ‘rough area’ but found solace in books. As long as he can remember, he has read three books a week. He plays many instruments and enjoys bluegrass festivals and symphonies.

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