

## TOPIC 4

# Socialization

**A** BABY BORN INTO SOCIAL LIFE WILL UNDERGO A MOST remarkable transformation in the first few years. From a crying, random, moving, stretching baby, this child will soon learn to sit and crawl and walk and talk and think and react to others in patterned and predictable ways. In the span of a few months, the child will learn to think for itself, express itself, and develop some very sophisticated physical, intellectual, and social skills. By age four or five, this child will be able to leave the home and effectively operate at school, with other children at play, as well as in many other social settings. Amazing!! How does this happen?

Sociology, along with the other sciences, knows this is much more than a biological process. Socialization is the process whereby persons develop the skills to operate effectively in social life. Families are a large contributor to socialization, for it is through these early moments in our lives that we come to develop the physical and intellectual abilities that will carry us for decades to come. But as our world grows, the influence of other adults, peers, schools, and neighborhoods impinge on us and affect our socialization as well. It is through this process of socialization that we must learn to become both an individual and a member of a community, and it is through this process of socialization that what exists outside us in society will become part of our personal makeup as unique human beings.

The debate over the relative contributions of biology and social experience—*nature* and *nurture*—has been raging for nearly two centuries. Sometimes we are more ready to listen to the genetic arguments, sometimes to the social science arguments. In fact, both sets of

variables affect who we are as adult human beings, but we work to refine the information in ways that make our models more accurate and more complete. For example, is our *gendered* behavior more from our genetic makeup or our social experiences? There is evidence on both sides, but the social sciences stress the data that show we are mostly human, and socialized, because of our associations with other people.

Importantly, socialization will continue for the entirety of our lives. We will be socialized in school settings, we will be socialized during our employment, and we will move to different communities and learn the social habits and patterns of this new environment as well. This socialization process enables us to learn and be effective in the new roles we adopt; at the same time, it alters our self-concepts and identities. As social beings we are in a constant state of flux as we change and adapt to the altered social circumstances life presents. If we are able to make these changes with skill and ease, we will increase measurably the equanimity in our lives. We can learn from sociology, and from understanding the process of socialization, some very important and valuable information.

The three articles for this topic, Socialization, include first, by Madonna Constantine and Sha'kema Blackmon, a study about the racial socialization experiences of "Black Adolescents." This quantitative research article shows the relationship of certain social events to the students' self-esteem. It also raises interesting questions for African-American parents and educators regarding conformity to dominant cultural norms. Second, a very important article by Kingsley Davis illustrates how the "extreme isolation" of two girls underscores the fact that children require human contact and social interaction to develop beyond the most rudimentary levels. Indeed, our humanness depends on social contact. This is case study research in the descriptive tradition. Finally, Joan Morris and Michael Grimes give us an insider's view of working class sociologists who become Ph.D.s. The contradictions inherent in jumping from one class to another can uncover problems that are both professional and personal. This is yet another glimpse of sociology from the inside and encourages readers to wonder about the contradiction potential in their own biographies.

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MADONNA G. CONSTANTINE AND  
SHA'KEMA M. BLACKMON

## Black Adolescents' Racial Socialization Experiences Their Relations to Home, School, and Peer Self-Esteem

Many researchers have theorized that racism and discrimination act as developmental mediators in the lives of Black Americans across their life spans (e.g., Comer, 1989; Duncan, 1993; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Gougis, 1986; Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991). Among Black adolescents, in particular, developing and maintaining a healthy racial identity can be daunting in the context of current turbulent race relations in the United States (Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997). The task of healthy racial identity development may be especially challenging for Black adolescents because they must negotiate mainstream, minority, and Black cultural and community experiences (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Thornton, 1997). Mainstream experiences represent experiences related to the dominant culture of the United States, minority experiences may represent political and social injustices associated with being a numerical and social minority in the United States, and Black cultural and community experiences represent experiences within the African American community (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Thornton, 1997) . . .

The link between self-esteem and academic performance among Black American adolescents may be related to how they process

achievement experiences at school and in other areas of their lives. According to van Laar (2000), African American students may make two kinds of attributions about their experiences. The first type, internal attributions, cause individuals to internalize negative stigma and self-blame for lowered academic performance. In contrast, external attributions lead individuals to direct blame away from themselves and assign blame to structural barriers such as racism and discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker & Quinn, 1998). Thus, Black adolescents who make external attributions related to their academic performance may selectively devalue the importance of school and academic achievement in the overall context of their lives (Crocker & Quinn, 1998). Such attributions may be a primary reason that Black youth disengage their self-esteem from academically related outcomes in grade school through college (Hare, 1985; Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, 1998; Osbourne, 1995). Further, many Black adolescents may derive a positive sense of self from their families and peers who may encourage them to derive their self-esteem from achievements outside of the academic realm. . . .

Not only may racial socialization messages be linked to Black adolescents' self-esteem at a global level, but they may also be related to these youths' self-esteem in specific areas of their lives. Because sense of self among Black American youth is complex and because the examination of global self-esteem may not provide a clear understanding of the experiences of Black adolescents, it seems important to explore specific self-esteem domains (i.e., home, school, and peer) in this population of individuals. For example, although many Black American adolescents' general sense of self is not significantly affected by lowered performance in school (e.g., Schmader et al., 2001; van Laar, 2000, 2001), it is possible that these students may have differing self-perceptions across home, school, and peer milieus (McAdoo, 1985; Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999).

Hence, the primary goal of this study was to examine the relationship between parental racial socialization messages and area-specific self-esteem (i.e., home, school, and peer) among Black American adolescents. Based on previous literature in the areas of academic achievement, self-esteem, and racial socialization, we hypothesized that racial socialization messages would be significantly predictive of Black adolescents' area-specific self-esteem.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

The participants consisted of 115 middle-school (6th, 7th, and 8th grade) students attending a predominantly Black parochial school in the north-east region of the United States. These students were asked to participate in an anonymous study examining their personal attitudes and experiences. They completed a survey packet consisting of the Teenager Experiences of Racial Socialization Scale (TERS) (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2001), the Hare General and Area-Specific Self-Esteem Scale (HGASSES) (Hare, 1996), and a brief demographic questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained from both students and their parents prior to students' participation in the study, and no incentives were provided for their participation. However, students, parents, teachers, and administrators were told that they would be given the study's results at their request. Because the surveys were administered and completed during specific class times, the return rate of surveys was high (i.e., 100%). . . .

### *Instrument*

. . . HGASSES. The HGASSES (Hare, 1996) is a 30-item, 4-point, Likert-type instrument (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) that assesses both general self-esteem and area-specific self-esteem in the home, school, and peer domains. These domains correspond to the three HGASSES subscales, each of which consists of 10 items. The general self-esteem score is derived by computing the three subscales. . . .

## Results

Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for the study's variables, along with the interscale correlations. Prior to conducting the main analysis, a series of multivariate analyses of variance ( $p = .05$ ) was computed to determine whether students differed by sex and ethnicity with regard to the study's variables. Results revealed no statistically significant interaction, Pillai's Trace = .18,  $F(16, 204) = 1.26, p > .05$ ; or main effect differences by sex, Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(8, 101) = 1.70, p > .05$ ; or ethnicity, Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(16, 204) = 0.79, p > .05$ . Hence, sex and ethnicity were not included as independent variables in the main analysis.

**TABLE 4.1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of the Study's Variables**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2001)	24.93	5.70	—	.67***	.57***	.69***	.39***	.16	-.03	-.04
1. Cultural coping with antagonism subscale										
2. Cultural pride reinforcement subscale	22.94	3.20	—	—	.49***	.71***	.26***	.26***	.08	.20*
3. Cultural appreciation of legacy subscale	12.74	2.97	—	—	—	.64***	.35***	.24***	.04	.09
4. Cultural alertness to discrimination subscale	10.49	2.92	—	—	—	—	.36***	.05	-.05	-.03
5. Cultural endorsement of the mainstream subscale	7.71	1.87	—	—	—	—	—	-.09	-.31**	-.10
Hare General and Area-Specific Self-Esteem Scale (Hare, 1996)										
6. Home self-esteem subscale	33.92	5.06	—	—	—	—	—	—	.45***	.36***
7. School self-esteem subscale	30.41	3.93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.41***
8. Peer self-esteem subscale	30.20	4.29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To examine the study's hypothesis, a multivariate multiple regression analysis was performed. This analytic procedure was chosen to control for the possible intercorrelations between the predictor and criterion variables (Haase & Ellis, 1987; Lunneborg & Abbot, 1983; Stevens, 1986). A multivariate multiple regression analysis can accommodate multiple predictor and multiple criterion variables, all of which are continuously distributed, from which follow-up tests can determine the unique contribution of each predictor variable on each criterion variable (Lutz & Eckert, 1994). In our study, the predictor variables were the five subscales of the TERS (i.e., cultural coping with antagonism, cultural pride reinforcement, cultural appreciation of legacy, cultural alertness to discrimination, and cultural endorsement of the mainstream). The criterion variables were the three subscales of the HGASSES (i.e., home, school, and peer self-esteem).

Results revealed that the overall proportion of variance in Black adolescents' home, school, and peer self-esteem accounted for by the five TERS subscales was statistically significant. . . . Results of [univariate] analyses revealed that the five TERS subscales accounted for significant variance in Black American youths' home self-esteem, . . . school self-esteem, . . . and peer self-esteem. . . .

Follow-up analyses were then conducted to examine the unique contribution of each of the predictor variables on the criterion variables. Results of these analyses indicated that greater cultural pride reinforcement socialization messages were related to higher peer self-esteem in Black American adolescents. . . . Conversely, higher cultural endorsement of the mainstream racial socialization messages were found to be associated with lower school self-esteem in Black youth. . . .

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parental racial socialization messages and area-specific self-esteem in Black American youth. Results revealed that cultural pride reinforcement socialization messages were positively correlated with Black adolescents' peer self-esteem. This finding may suggest that some of the racial values and practices taught by many Black American parents or caregivers are expressed and validated within Black adolescents' peer groups. Conversely, it is possible that Black youths' peer groups may reinforce

their cultural pride socialization messages. Nonetheless, the potentially interdependent roles of parents and peers with regard to providing positive racial group messages seem crucial to the social success of many Black youths, and the ways in which these roles affect each other may provide Black adolescents with the skills to develop healthy self-perceptions and means for coping with racial discrimination and prejudice (Johnson, 1988). Hence, home and peer milieus that support the development of Black American youths' positive self-esteem may equip them to face a sometimes unfriendly and hostile world outside of these safe havens.

The finding that higher cultural endorsement of the mainstream racial socialization messages were negatively associated with school self-esteem may suggest that adopting more Eurocentric cultural values and behaviors (i.e., the "acting White" assumption) could serve as a detriment to Black students' academic self-efficacy in the context of predominantly Black school settings. . . . Hence, it is not surprising that some Black parents may choose to place their children in predominantly Black or Afrocentric school environments to (a) expose them to certain aspects of their culture in the context of educational settings, (b) affirm and reinforce some race-related practices and competencies with which they entered school, and (c) insulate them from racism until they have developed their own effective coping mechanisms.

In light of the aforementioned finding, it is also plausible to consider that Black adolescents who are exposed to greater cultural endorsement of the mainstream racial socialization messages may feel more comfortable in predominantly White school environments because their values may be more congruent with students matriculating in these settings. However, regardless of educational environment, the adoption of largely White cultural values or behaviors may be detrimental to some Black adolescents' self-esteem and racial identity development because it may promote the misconception that Black is inferior to White. It is also possible that this finding may be related, in part, to the ways that self-esteem generally develops among Black American youth in schools and in other institutions that may mirror cultural values associated with the dominant culture in the United States. For example, according to Crocker and Quinn (1998), Black Americans' self-esteem may be protected by directing blame away from themselves and assigning blame to structural barriers such as racism and discrimination and by devaluing domains and areas in which some members of their racial or ethnic group do not perform

well historically (e.g., academics). Thus, Black American students who endorse mainstream values and behaviors, regardless of their educational setting, may evidence lower school self-esteem because they are unable or unwilling to consider the possibility that racism or discrimination could be contributing to their suboptimal academic functioning in the context of some school environments. . . .

Future investigations should continue examining racial socialization experiences and self-esteem in Black American adolescents from multiple research paradigms. For example, there is a need for longitudinal studies with Black American youth and their families to understand the specific strategies that parents may use to impart racial socialization messages and experiences to their children. Moreover, it may be important for future researchers to investigate how Black children and adolescents may process racial socialization messages in the context of home, school, and peer situations. Finally, future investigators may wish to explore how racial socialization messages may mediate the relationship between experiences of chronic racial discrimination and the development of psychological distress in African American youth.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the relationships between self-esteem at school and the racial pride messages given by parents?
2. What cultural messages might you give your children so they have positive self-esteem and perform well in the school setting?

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KINGSLEY DAVIS

## Extreme Isolation

Early in 1940 there appeared in this *Journal* an account of a girl called Anna.<sup>1</sup> She had been deprived of normal contact and had received a minimum of human care for almost the whole of her first six years of life. At that time observations were not complete and the report had a tentative character. Now, however, the girl is dead, and, with more information available,<sup>2</sup> it is possible to give a fuller and more definitive description of the case from a sociological point of view.

Anna's death, caused by hemorrhagic jaundice, occurred on August 6, 1942. Having been born on March 1 or 6,<sup>3</sup> 1932, she was approximately ten and a half years of age when she died. The previous report covered her development up to the age of almost eight years; the present one recapitulates the earlier period on the basis of new evidence and then covers the last two and a half years of her life.

### Early History

The first few days and weeks of Anna's life were complicated by frequent changes of domicile. It will be recalled that she was an illegitimate child, the second such child born to her mother, and that her grandfather, a widowed farmer in whose house her mother lived, strongly disapproved of this new evidence of the mother's indiscretion. This fact led to the baby's being shifted about.

Two weeks after being born in a nurse's private home, Anna was brought to the family farm, but the grandfather's antagonism was so great that she was shortly taken to the house of one of her mother's

friends. At this time a local minister became interested in her and took her to his house with an idea of possible adoption. He decided against adoption, however, when he discovered that she had vaginitis. The infant was then taken to a children's home in the nearest large city. This agency found that at the age of only three weeks she was already in a miserable condition, being "terribly galled and otherwise in very bad shape." It did not regard her as a likely subject for adoption but took her in for a while anyway, hoping to benefit her. After Anna had spent nearly eight weeks in this place, the agency notified her mother to come to get her. The mother responded by sending a man and his wife to the children's home with a view to their adopting Anna, but they made such a poor impression on the agency that permission was refused. Later the mother came herself and took the child out of the home and then gave her to this couple. It was in the home of this pair that a social worker found the girl a short time thereafter. The social worker went to the mother's home and pleaded with Anna's grandfather to allow the mother to bring the child home. In spite of threats, he refused. The child, by then more than four months old, was next taken to another children's home in a near-by town. A medical examination at this time revealed that she had impetigo, vaginitis, umbilical hernia, and a skin rash.

Anna remained in this second children's home for nearly three weeks, at the end of which time she was transferred to a private foster-home. Since, however, the grandfather would not, and the mother could not, pay for the child's care, she was finally taken back as a last resort to the grandfather's house (at the age of five and a half months). There she remained, kept on the second floor in an attic-like room because her mother hesitated to incur the grandfather's wrath by bringing her downstairs.

The mother, a sturdy woman weighing about 180 pounds, did a man's work on the farm. She engaged in heavy work such as milking cows and tending hogs and had little time for her children. Sometimes she went out at night, in which case Anna was left entirely without attention. Ordinarily, it seems, Anna received only enough care to keep her barely alive. She appears to have been seldom moved from one position to another. Her clothing and bedding were filthy. She apparently had no instruction, no friendly attention.

It is little wonder that, when finally found and removed from the room in the grandfather's house at the age of nearly six years, the child could not talk, walk, or do anything that showed intelligence. She was in an extremely emaciated and undernourished condition, with

skeleton-like legs and a bloated abdomen. She had been fed on virtually nothing except cow's milk during the years under her mother's care.

Anna's condition when found, and her subsequent improvement, have been described in the previous report. It now remains to say what happened to her after that.

## Later History

In 1939, nearly two years after being discovered, Anna had progressed, as previously reported, to the point where she could walk, understand simple commands, feed herself, achieve some neatness, remember people, etc. But she still did not speak, and, though she was much more like a normal infant of something over one year of age in mentality, she was far from normal for her age.

On August 30, 1939, she was taken to a private home for retarded children, leaving the county home where she had been for more than a year and a half. In her new setting she made some further progress, but not a great deal. In a report of an examination made November 6 of the same year, the head of the institution pictured the child as follows:

*Anna walks about aimlessly, makes periodic rhythmic motions of her hands, and, at intervals, makes guttural and sucking noises. She regards her hands as if she had seen them for the first time. It was impossible to hold her attention for more than a few seconds at a time—not because of distraction due to external stimuli but because of her inability to concentrate. She ignored the task in hand to gaze vacantly about the room. Speech is entirely lacking. Numerous unsuccessful attempts have been made with her in the hope of developing initial sounds. I do not believe that this failure is due to negativism or deafness but that she is not sufficiently developed to accept speech at this time. . . . The prognosis is not favorable. . . .*

More than five months later, on April 25, 1940, a clinical psychologist, the late Professor Francis N. Maxfield, examined Anna and reported the following: large for her age; hearing “entirely normal”; vision apparently normal; able to climb stairs; speech in the “babbling stage” and “promise for developing intelligible speech later seems to be good.” He said further that “on the Merrill-Palmer scale she made a mental score of 19 months. On the Vineland social maturity scale she made a score of 23 months.”<sup>4</sup>

Professor Maxfield very sensibly pointed out that prognosis is difficult in such cases of isolation. "It is very difficult to take scores on tests standardized under average conditions of environment and experience," he wrote, "and interpret them in a case where environment and experience have been so unusual." With this warning he gave it as his opinion at that time that Anna would eventually "attain an adult mental level of six or seven years."<sup>5</sup>

The school for retarded children, on July 1, 1941, reported that Anna had reached 46 inches in height and weighed 60 pounds. She could bounce and catch a ball and was said to conform to group socialization, though as a follower rather than a leader. Toilet habits were firmly established. Food habits were normal, except that she still used a spoon as her sole implement. She could dress herself except for fastening her clothes. Most remarkable of all, she had finally begun to develop speech. She was characterized as being at about the two-year level in this regard. She could call attendants by name and bring in one when she was asked to. She had a few complete sentences to express her wants. The report concluded that there was nothing peculiar about her, except that she was feeble-minded—"probably congenital in type."<sup>6</sup>

A final report from the school, made on June 22, 1942, and evidently the last report before the girl's death, pictured only a slight advance over that given above. It said that Anna could follow directions, string beads, identify a few colors, build with blocks, and differentiate between attractive and unattractive pictures. She had a good sense of rhythm and loved a doll. She talked mainly in phrases but would repeat words and try to carry on a conversation. She was clean about clothing. She habitually washed her hands and brushed her teeth. She would try to help other children. She walked well and could run fairly well, though clumsily. Although easily excited, she had a pleasant disposition.

## Interpretation

Such was Anna's condition just before her death. It may seem as if she had not made much progress, but one must remember the condition in which she had been found. One must recall that she had no glimmering of speech, absolutely, no ability to walk, no sense of gesture, not the least capacity to feed herself even when the food was put in front of her, and no comprehension of cleanliness. She was so apathetic that it was hard to tell whether or not she could hear. And all this at the age of

nearly six years. Compared with this condition, her capacities at the time of her death seem striking indeed, though they do not amount to much more than a two-and-a-half year mental level. One conclusion therefore seems safe, namely, that her isolation prevented a considerable amount of mental development that was undoubtedly part of her capacity. Just what her original capacity was, of course, is hard to say; but her development after her period of confinement (including the ability to walk and run, to play, dress, fit into a social situation, and, above all, to speak) shows that she had at least this much capacity—capacity that never could have been realized in her original condition of isolation.

A further question is this: What would she have been like if she had received a normal upbringing from the moment of birth? A definitive answer would have been impossible in any case, but even an approximate answer is made difficult by her early death. If one assumes, as was tentatively surmised in the previous report, that it is “almost impossible for any child to learn to speak, think, and act like a normal person after a long period of early isolation,” it seems likely that Anna might have had a normal or near-normal capacity, genetically speaking. On the other hand, it was pointed out that Anna represented “a marginal case [because] she was discovered before she had reached six years of age,” an age “young enough to allow for some plasticity.”<sup>7</sup> While admitting, then, that Anna’s isolation *may* have been the major cause (and was certainly a minor cause) of her lack of rapid mental progress during the four and a half years following her rescue from neglect, it is necessary to entertain the hypothesis that she was congenitally deficient.

In connection with this hypothesis, one suggestive though by no means conclusive circumstance needs consideration, namely, the mentality of Anna’s forebears. Information on this subject is easier to obtain, as one might guess, on the mother’s than on the father’s side. Anna’s maternal grandmother, for example, is said to have been college educated and wished to have her children receive a good education, but her husband, Anna’s stern grandfather, apparently a shrewd, hard-driving, calculating farmowner, was so penurious that her ambitions in this direction were thwarted. Under the circumstances her daughter (Anna’s mother) managed, despite having to do hard work on the farm, to complete the eighth grade in a country school. Even so, however, the daughter was evidently not very smart. “A schoolmate of [Anna’s mother] stated that she was retarded in school work; was very gullible at this age; and that her morals even at this time were discussed by

other students.” Two tests administered to her on March 4, 1938, when she was thirty-two years of age, showed that she was mentally deficient. On the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale her performance was equivalent to that of a child of eight years, giving her an I.Q. of 50 and indicating mental deficiency of “middle-grade moron type.”<sup>8</sup>

As to the identity of Anna’s father, the most persistent theory holds that he was an old man about seventy-four years of age at the time of the girl’s birth. If he was the one, there is no indication of mental or other biological deficiency, whatever one may think of his morals. However, someone else may actually have been the father.

To sum up: Anna’s heredity is the kind that *might* have given rise to innate mental deficiency, though not necessarily.

## Comparison with Another Case

Perhaps more to the point than speculations about Anna’s ancestry would be a case for comparison. If a child could be discovered who had been isolated about the same length of time as Anna but had achieved a much quicker recovery and a greater mental development, it would be a stronger indication that Anna was deficient to start with.

Such a case does exist. It is the case of a girl found at about the same time as Anna and under strikingly similar circumstances. . . .

Born apparently one month later than Anna, the girl in question, who has been given the pseudonym Isabelle, was discovered in November, 1938, nine months after the discovery of Anna. At the time she was found she was approximately six and a half years of age. Like Anna, she was an illegitimate child and had been kept in seclusion for that reason. Her mother was a deaf-mute, having become so at the age of two, and it appears that she and Isabelle had spent most of their time together in a dark room shut off from the rest of the mother’s family. As a result Isabelle had no chance to develop speech; when she communicated with her mother, it was by means of gestures. Lack of sunshine and inadequacy of diet had caused Isabelle to become rachitic. Her legs in particular were affected; they “were so bowed that as she stood erect the soles of her shoes came nearly flat together, and she got about with a skittering gait.”<sup>9</sup> Her behavior toward strangers, especially men, was almost that of a wild animal, manifesting much fear and hostility. In lieu of speech she made only a strange croaking sound. In many ways she acted like an infant. “She was apparently utterly

unaware of relationships of any kind. When presented with a ball for the first time, she held it in the palm of her hand, then reached out and stroked my face with it. Such behavior is comparable to that of a child of six months."<sup>10</sup> At first it was even hard to tell whether or not she could hear, so unused were her senses. Many of her actions resembled those of deaf children.

It is small wonder that, once it was established that she could hear, specialists working with her believed her to be feeble-minded. . . . "The general impression was that she was wholly uneducable and that any attempt to teach her to speak, after so long a period of silence, would meet with failure."<sup>11</sup>

In spite of this interpretation, the individuals in charge of Isabelle launched a systematic and skilful program of training. It seemed hopeless at first. The approach had to be through pantomime and dramatization, suitable to an infant. It required one week of intensive effort before she even made her first attempt at vocalization. Gradually she began to respond, however, and, after the first hurdles had at last been overcome, a curious thing happened. She went through the usual stages of learning characteristic of the years from one to six not only in proper succession but far more rapidly than normal. In a little over two months after her first vocalization she was putting sentences together. Nine months after that she could identify words and sentences on the printed page, could write well, could add to ten, and could retell a story after hearing it. Seven months beyond this point she had a vocabulary of 1,500–2,000 words and was asking complicated questions. Starting from an educational level of between one and three years (depending on what aspect one considers), she had reached a normal level by the time she was eight and a half years old. In short, she covered in two years the stages of learning that ordinarily require six.<sup>12</sup> Or, to put it another way, her I.Q. trebled in a year and a half.<sup>13</sup> The speed with which she reached the normal level of mental development seems analogous to the recovery of body weight in a growing child after an illness, the recovery being achieved by an extra fast rate of growth for a period after the illness until normal weight for the given age is again attained.

When the writer saw Isabelle a year and a half after her discovery, she gave him the impression of being a very bright, cheerful, energetic little girl. She spoke well, walked and ran without trouble, and sang with gusto and accuracy. Today she is over fourteen years old and has passed the sixth grade in a public school. Her teachers say that she participates in all school activities as normally as other children. Though

older than her classmates, she has fortunately not physically matured too far beyond their level.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly the story of Isabelle's development is different from that of Anna's. In both cases there was an exceedingly low, or rather blank, intellectual level to begin with. In both cases it seemed that the girl might be congenitally feeble minded. In both a considerably higher level was reached later on. But the Ohio girl achieved a normal mentality within two years, whereas Anna was still marked inadequate at the end of four and a half years. This difference in achievement may suggest that Anna had less initial capacity. But an alternative hypothesis is possible.

One should remember that Anna never received the prolonged and expert attention that Isabelle received. The result of such attention, in the case of the Ohio girl, was to give her speech at an early stage, and her subsequent rapid development seems to have been a consequence of that. "Until Isabelle's speech and language development, she had all the characteristics of a feeble-minded child." Had Anna, who, from the standpoint of psychometric tests and early history, closely resembled this girl at the start, been given a mastery of speech at an earlier point by intensive training, her subsequent development might have been much more rapid.<sup>15</sup>

The hypothesis that Anna began with a sharply inferior mental capacity is therefore not established. Even if she were deficient to start with, we have no way of knowing how much so. Under ordinary conditions she might have been a dull normal or, like her mother, a moron. Even after the blight of her isolation, if she had lived to maturity, she might have finally reached virtually the full level of her capacity, whatever it may have been. That her isolation did have a profound effect upon her mentality, there can be no doubt. This is proved by the substantial degree of change during the four and a half years following her rescue.

Consideration of Isabelle's case serves to show, as Anna's case does not clearly show, that isolation up to the age of six, with failure to acquire any form of speech and hence failure to grasp nearly the whole world of cultural meaning, does not preclude the subsequent acquisition of these. Indeed, there seems to be a process of accelerated recovery in which the child goes through the mental stages at a more rapid rate than would be the case in normal development. Just what would be the maximum age at which a person could remain isolated and still retain the capacity for full cultural acquisition is hard to say. Almost certainly it would not be as high as age fifteen; it might possibly be as low

as age ten. Undoubtedly various individuals would differ considerably as to the exact age.

Anna's is not an ideal case for showing the effects of extreme isolation, partly because she was possibly deficient to begin with, partly because she did not receive the best training available, and partly because she did not live long enough. Nevertheless, her case is instructive when placed in the record with numerous other cases of extreme isolation. This and the previous article about her are meant to place her in the record. It is to be hoped that other cases will be described in the scientific literature as they are discovered (as unfortunately they will be), for only in these rare cases of extreme isolation is it possible "to observe *concretely separated* two factors in the development of human personality which are always otherwise only analytically separated, the biogenic and the sociogenic factors."<sup>16</sup>

## NOTES

1. Kingsley Davis, "Extreme Social Isolation of a Child," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLV (January, 1940), 554–65.
2. Sincere appreciation is due to the officials in the Department of Welfare, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for their kind co-operation in making available the records concerning Anna and discussing the case frankly with the writer. Helen C. Hubbell, Florentine Hackbusch, and Eleanor Meckelburg were particularly helpful, as was Fanny L. Matchette. Without their aid neither of the reports on Anna could have been written.
3. The records are not clear as to which day.
4. Letter to one of the state officials in charge of the case.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Progress report of the school.
7. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 564.
8. The facts set forth here as to Anna's ancestry are taken chiefly from a report of mental tests administered to Anna's mother by psychologists at a state hospital where she was taken for this purpose after the discovery of Anna's seclusion. This excellent report was not available to the writer when the previous paper on Anna was published.
9. Maxfield, unpublished manuscript cited above.
10. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
11. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 300–304.
13. Maxfield, unpublished manuscript.
14. Based on a personal letter from Dr. Mason to the writer, May 13, 1946.
15. This point is suggested in a personal letter from Dr. Mason to the writer, October 22, 1946.
16. Singh and Zingg, *op. cit.*, pp. xxi–xxii, in a foreword by the writer.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Based on the research evidence in this article, how would you answer the nature versus nurture question?
2. What was the outcome for the two girls once they were found and educated?

## 12

## READING

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JOAN M. MORRIS AND MICHAEL D. GRIMES

## Contradictions in the Childhood Socialization of Sociologists from the Working Class

*Early socialization within a class culture has important and long-lasting effects. Therefore, when individuals are socialized within a working-class family environment, they can expect to experience “culture shock” when they achieve upward mobility that takes them out of their class-of-origin and into the foreign terrain of middle-class culture. And, to the extent that gender and race or ethnicity manifest themselves in ways that are distinctively class-oriented, the effects of this “shock” are magnified for women, for people of color, and for the members of ethnic minorities. The focus of this paper is on the childhood socialization of a group of sociologists from working-class backgrounds—a group of people who have, by most standards, “made something” of themselves, but not necessarily in the ways their parents intended. In fact, for many of them, their successes have been accomplished in spite of what their parents taught them about what it means to be successful; their successes have also sometimes come at the expense of the approval and acceptance of their families and childhood peers.*

... The focus of this paper is on the childhood socialization of a group of sociologists from working-class backgrounds—a group of people who have, by most standards, “made something” of themselves, but not necessarily in the ways their parents intended. In fact, as will be demonstrated below, for many of them, their successes have been accomplished in spite of what they were taught about what it means to be successful during their childhoods; their successes have also sometimes come at the expense of the approval and acceptance of their families and childhood peers. The data for the paper come from a larger study that addresses events throughout the life courses and careers of a group of forty-five sociologists from working-class backgrounds. Each

participant who volunteered to be part of the study was asked to contribute three things: responses to a set of open-ended questions; responses to a questionnaire; and a curriculum vitae.

The major thesis of this paper is that early socialization within a class culture has deep and abiding effects. More specifically, when individuals are socialized within a working-class family environment, they can expect to experience “culture shock” when they achieve upward mobility that takes them out of their class-of-origin and into the foreign terrain of middle-class culture. And, to the extent that gender and race or ethnicity manifest themselves in ways that are distinctively class-oriented, the effects of this “shock” are magnified for women, for people of color, and for the members of ethnic minorities. The present analysis focuses its attention on the impacts of early socialization within working-class culture, how these experiences have influenced the careers of academics from working-class backgrounds, and the unique effects that result for women and for the members of racial and ethnic minorities from working-class backgrounds.

## Learning What “Feels Right”

The first and most enduring exposure to culture occurs during childhood socialization. A number of analysts have concluded that the class location of parents is one of the most important influences on the socialization experiences of children (Kohn and Schooler 1983; Bourdieu 1984, 1986; Coleman 1990; Lareau 1989) because the parents’ class location is directly linked to the nature of the resources that a family possesses and makes available to its children.

Parents may pass a variety of resources down to their children, including a range of explicit but also implicit goods, not the least of which is the cultural knowledge associated with their social class. Wright defines social class as based on three dimensions, each a type of power that is indicative of where one stands in the class structure. The three (property, skills/credentials, and organizational control) combine to produce a class system in which the hierarchy is defined according to power over oneself and others (see Wright 1985). The working-class, in Wright’s model, have least power over the three dimensions, i.e., they do not own the means of production; they possess few credentials; and they have little decision-making power over their work or the work of others. Kohn and Schooler (1983) and others have found that the power relations present in one’s job carry

over into the home. Families who command few of the resources valued in the work world cannot help also including a sense of powerlessness in the resources they pass down to their children.

Bourdieu (1984, 1986) refers to family resources as the total volume of “capital” available for expropriation by a child. He argues that capital assumes three forms: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital refers to material wealth or economic power, a form of capital “which is immediately or directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu 1986:243). Cultural capital refers to a broad range of knowledge about the world within which an individual lives. This form of capital is important because it is “convertible, in certain situations, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (Bourdieu 1986:243). Social capital refers to the network of social connections (a social network) that can be effectively mobilized by the family for its use. It too can be converted into economic capital under certain circumstances. Bourdieu argues that social classes can be placed on a continuum (or a set of continua) according to the level of economic or material wealth it controls, the cultural capital it possesses, and the potential benefits of its social contacts.

Bourdieu devotes most of his attention to cultural capital because he sees it as essential to the utilization of the other two forms and because of its central role in the intergenerational reproduction of social class. He argues that cultural capital may be manifested in three different ways: the embodied state, the objectified state, and institutionalized state (Bourdieu 1986:254).

The “embodied state” of cultural capital refers to the most fundamental state, that which is linked to the body. It is “external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus . . .” (1986:245). All forms of communication in the presentation-of-self are included here, e.g., ways of speaking (vocabulary and accent), manners, posture or poise, etc. This form of capital, since it is embodied within individuals, cannot (like money or property) be transmitted by gift, bequest, purchase or exchange. This form of capital is, above all, an investment of time. . . .

Bourdieu’s second type of cultural capital, objectified capital, exists in the form of material objects such as writings, paintings, etc., and as such, has some properties that are only defined in relationship to cultural capital in its embodied form. That is, the material objects can only be appreciated by those with *embodied* culture. . . .

Bourdieu's third type, the "institutionalized state" of cultural capital, is best exemplified by the academic credential. Similar to cultural capital in its embodied state, the institutionalized form of cultural capital has the same biological limits as its bearer (i.e., it can't be bequeathed, it applies only to the bearer). Cultural capital in its institutionalized state, unlike the embodied form, is more manifest. In its institutionalized form, it takes on the character of a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value. Holding a credential means there is official recognition that one meets certain qualifications, has achieved a particular level of competence. . . .

While the participants in our study obviously possess the necessary credentials for high levels of institutionalized cultural capital, we found evidence of a lack of exposure to both "embodied" and "objectified" cultural capital. For example, we asked them to describe the cultural environment in their homes while growing up. Based on their responses, we developed a coding scheme that contained a total of eighteen indicators of cultural activities. This list included such things as: (the presence of) books, newspapers, magazines in the home; listening to music (and the type of music); visits to museums and libraries; attending movies; going to plays and concerts; taking music or dance lessons; television viewing, etc. Following Bourdieu's (1984) distinction between "high" and "low" cultural activities, we then selected a sub-set of these activities that served as a kind of index of "high" culture. This group of activities included such things as listening to classical music, taking music/dance lessons, visits to museums, attending plays and concerts, and engaging in intellectual discussions with parents or older siblings.

Our results show that a full two-thirds of our respondents had experienced *none* of these activities during their childhoods. Only two out of ten had experienced one of them; and no respondent had experienced more than three of them. In terms of gender, female respondents were no more likely to have experienced these activities than were our male respondents (though the one respondent who experienced three of them was a woman). Without identical data on this subject from a group of academics from middle-class backgrounds with which to compare findings, it is difficult to place them in a meaningful context. What we can say, however, is that these data contrast sharply with the levels of exposure to "high" culture enjoyed by our own children and those of most of our colleagues. They are also consistent with Bourdieu's (1984) conclusion that the exposure to "high" culture is directly related to the family's position in the class structure. . . .

As the work of Bourdieu, Coleman, and others makes clear, socialization in working-class homes is, in many ways, different from socialization in middle-class or upper middle-class homes. This goes beyond the level of material consumption (economic capital) the family is able to enjoy. In comparison to middle-class children, working-class children are taught a different set of values and are, themselves, valued differently. As has been well established (Kohn and Schooler 1983; Coleman 1990; Parcel and Menaghan 1994), the socialization of working-class children is heavily influenced by the occupational experiences of their parents. Parents tend to re-create components of their work environments at home; e.g., when parents work in jobs that provide little opportunity for autonomy and independent thought, they are likely to encourage their children to conform rather than to think independently. Despite the fact that most parents stress “independence” in their children, it is what they mean by it that differs. While middle-class parents may be more interested in creativity and self-determination, the primary concern of working-class parents is that their children be able to support themselves, i.e., to do a “day’s work for a day’s pay” and to avoid appearing weak by asking for help. To the extent that a high level of conformity is required in most working-class jobs, “independence” may come to mean just the opposite of what middle-class parents expect. In making comparisons such as these it is necessary to recognize that the differences between class cultures means there is also a lack of agreement on meanings and values—differences that may be masked by the use of similar language. . . .

## Economic Capital

The U.S. working-class is a heterogeneous group in its range of material circumstances and our respondents’ childhood homes were not exceptional in that regard. About one-third of respondents reported no material deprivation during their childhoods (16 respondents); another third reported they did feel a sense of material deprivation as children (15 respondents); and the remainder fell between these two extremes, reporting various experiences of relative deprivation.

The following examples are typical of those who commented on their recognition of socioeconomic differences and their disadvantaged status.

*“I became aware of income differences (which is not to say class differences) around the fifth grade. Another child in my class asked me why I wore the same thing to school every day.”*

*“I felt materially deprived after my father died. As the years after went by we became poorer and poorer. By high school, I was wearing old (my mother’s) clothes, my middle brother would complain about not being able to buy new clothes. My older brother and mother would fight constantly about his giving more money to the household. The meals became smaller, but always attractively prepared.”*

The example below describes the sense of relative deprivation that one woman remembered feeling when she compared herself to her childhood peers.

*“I was quite aware of the fact that other Jewish families often went on summer vacations . . . we never did. My father had overtime, a concept unknown to my friends, their fathers worked 9 to 5. Also, when I was in elementary school and my mother went back to work, I had to go to summer day camp. I could not go to the day camp associated with the Jewish Community Center (JCC), but had to go to Girl Scouts Camp, because it cost less. . . . We only got one present on Hanukkah, not eight. I had hand-me-down clothes, not full priced clothing from department stores.”*

## Cultural Capital

The participants in this study provided a wealth of evidence in support of Bourdieu’s statement that cultural capital is “determinant in the reproduction of social structure” (1986:254). Yet, the fact that they have failed to reproduce the class structure within which they were raised raises an important point. Cultural capital is based on values, knowledge, and meaning. The autobiographical accounts provided by our respondents show how the social structure is reinforced and usually reproduced, often in subtle, nonobvious ways by the transmission of working-class culture. Parental encouragement and expectations are perhaps the most influential, but interaction with others is also important. . . .

## Encouragement and Expectations

The majority of respondents to our study reported that their parents encouraged them in their early educations. This is consistent with Laureau's (1989) findings that both working-class and middle-class parents prepare their children for school. The main difference, however, is that working-class parents tend to leave education to the "professionals" (teachers, guidance counselors, etc.) while middle-class parents stay more involved with their children's education throughout their school years. Working-class parents often see education as the route to a better job. One respondent wrote:

*"My parents were both committed to our gaining an education so we could have 'sit-down' jobs performing 'clean' work."*

To many, however, parental encouragement to "do well" in school meant to follow the rules, keep out of trouble, etc. To many working-class parents, a "good" report card was equivalent to a satisfactory evaluation at work. Getting good grades was an outward sign that you were able to fit into a system and accomplish what was expected. One respondent referred to his father's efforts to teach him "industrial discipline" in the following way:

*"He explained that I would always have a 'boss,' and that I would have to obey authority without question or reason."*

And in a similar vein, a respondent talks about her parents' concern that she "do well" in school:

*". . . this urgent need for conformity could be attributed in part to the working-class attitudes toward work. For the types of work that everyone did and that I was expected to do when I was grown, it was very necessary that one develop the 'proper' attitude toward authority."*

Education was perhaps more important in minority families. Several African American respondents commented on their families' exceptional encouragement of education—encouragement at a level that was somewhat unusual for white working-class children. For example:

*"My parents, grandparents and other relatives encouraged me during the years of my early education. My maternal grandmother, with whom I spent a great deal of time when I was very young, remembered the days when it was illegal to teach blacks to read. Therefore, she was*

*able to impress upon us the value of education. My parents were always supportive as well.”*

*“I was an only child and the center of a great deal of attention and favor. I was sheltered from the streets, continually watched and not allowed to play with many of the kids in the neighborhood and was sent back to the South during the summer, a not uncommon pattern of Black Southerners. In many ways, my mother and our family always had high expectations for behavior since it was one of the ways to separate us from ‘low class’ people.”*

## Pursuit of the “American Dream”

Respondents often gave accounts of parental support that were couched in the ideology of the dominant culture—the idea that one’s achievements are only limited by individual ability, willingness to work, etc. In the case of childhood socialization into the working-class, this ideology is inherently contradictory. That is, the belief that individuals can “make something of themselves,” and in fact, that *anyone* can make *anything* of themselves that they wish, suggests an open system, a meritocracy. However, any system within which merit would determine success would have to be based on equal access to resources, information being the most important. Working-class kids simply do not “see” the same career opportunities that middle-class kids see. Part of this is due to limited information about what is available and what the requirements are for seeking it. But some, and perhaps this is the larger issue, is due to limited aspirations. The following is a good example:

*“... Being a white, working class male in a stable household made me secure and comfortable. I believed in the ‘American Dream’ which meant that I could do or be almost anything I wanted. That I didn’t aspire to be a professional or manager was like not thinking that I could fly, it wasn’t a possibility. I figured I was going to do some type of blue-collar work, get married, have children, and own my own house.”*

All children develop their career aspirations within a class-specific culture. The fact that proportionately fewer children attend college at each lower level of the socioeconomic hierarchy is no accident—and it is not entirely due to affordability factors. One of the major places in which the class system is institutionalized is the family. The family’s location in the class system, in turn, determines the location and content of early educational experiences, and has a huge effect on the

make-up and orientation of peer groups. Values, expectations, and aspirations are formed and reinforced through interaction with family, friends, and teachers. Thus the social-psychological effects of early socialization have deep and enduring effects on individuals' lives. The following examples illustrate some of this.

*“... I was never encouraged to think about college (by teachers) and I was even discouraged from attending college by family and friends. Their attitudes had been developed by class background. The impact was that I got a terribly late start in completing my first college class (age 24).*

*“None of my teachers were influential in directing my path towards higher education before I dropped out of school. In fact, just the opposite. In the 9th grade, we were tested with a battery of tests. My homeroom teacher, an English teacher whom I was crazy about, informed my mother that I was a B student and was not college material. This was ironic because two years later, while I was pregnant, I undertook testing by (a federal agency . . . my mother made me do it) and they told me that I was almost a genius. I remember her words as we were leaving the building . . . she looked at my stomach and said, ‘some genius.’ ”*

## Inherent Contradictions in Parental Encouragement

Most respondents reported that their parents were interested in seeing their children “do better” than they had done. These interests were usually stated in general terms such as the following:

*“Both my parents had strong upwardly mobile ambitions for themselves, but especially for their children; they strove always to ‘get ahead’ to improve their economic condition and achieve some mobility.”*

Such generalized “encouragement” constitutes another contradiction to a common theme in these essays. This is something David Halle reported in his 1984 book, *America's Working Man*, the definition of manual work as the only real work, with intellectual or managerial work dismissed as not really work at all. By this definition, nonmanual workers are shamming, getting by, often not knowing what they are doing, and existing at the expense of the real workers. In response to a question concerning their parents' feelings about their work and its relative status and importance in society, the respondents repeatedly echoed this theme. One respondent

said his father made a distinction between himself and those at higher levels of the socioeconomic hierarchy by referring to himself as “. . . someone who actually works for a living.” Another referred to his father’s “canned phrases,” most of which he has forgotten but which implied that the “working man was always getting the shaft.” Other examples follow.

*“. . . he was hostile to the ‘big shots’ who worked in the plant office. . . ”*

*“. . . she felt that her work was very necessary—what would all those middle-class and rich women do without people like my mother to alter and mend their clothing?—was her line. She frequently compared herself invidiously to her customers, commented that they didn’t know how to thread a needle.”*

*“Both parents felt their work was important. My dad believed the working man did the real work while managers and engineers/architects did not generally know what they were doing.”*

*“My father would boast about how smart he was and how stupid his bosses were, I think to elevate the importance of his job.”*

## Social Capital

Bourdieu’s third form of capital is social capital, the potential to mobilize resources to one’s advantage through social ties. The clearest case of a shortage of social capital expressed by our respondents concerned access to higher education. Academics from working-class backgrounds often lack the information they need to achieve upward mobility, but this is, in large part, due to their limited access to a network of social ties with people who know the answers to their questions. For the members of working-class families who achieve mobility into professional positions, not only is it unclear how to map out a career path, but the options themselves are often as hidden as the means for finding out how to learn about them. The autobiographical essays written for this study contain numerous examples of individuals’ uncertainty about the answers to important questions, but more than that, they convey the retrospective recognition that they were as ignorant about the appropriate questions to be asked as they were of whom to ask them. One respondent gave the following account of her entry into college:

*“It is at this point that I became aware that both my economic and social origins provided a huge impediment to my undergraduate studies. I became aware of class for really the first time. No one was able to*

*help me find financial aid, fill out application forms, apply for scholarships, etc. No one read my scholarship essays. No one took me to the University to check it out. No one helped me to find an apartment. Even if it had entered my parents' thoughts, no one knew how to help me. I missed out on a huge chunk of financial aid because I missed the relevant deadlines. Every summer for the first three years of school, I lost 10–15 pounds for lack of food, really. I was even too stupid to apply for food stamps.”*

Another essayist talks about the influence of growing up in a Jewish home. Though her family was “clearly working-class,” most of her parents’ friends were middle-class. For her, the intersection of ethnicity and social class was somewhat positive, i.e., the influence of the Jewish subculture offset some of the limitations of working-class subculture. She attributes her parents’ encouragement for her education to her ethnicity. In her words, “To them, education was the most meaningful aspect of one’s life.” Still, she identifies class background as an impediment to higher education:

*“In some ways my class background was an impediment to higher education, in other ways it was not. I was not aware of many options. My parents did not know much of the college scene and guidance counselors at my high school were not well versed.”*

## The Relevance of “Social Class” as an Issue

The popular mythology in this country is that we live in a classless society or that, since most of us are located within an amorphous middle, social class has few consequences. The study’s participants reported similar attitudes for their parents. Though 81 percent of the respondents said their parents were aware of different class locations (most stated that their parents did not speak of *class* per se, but apparently recognized the existence of hierarchical arrangements in society) and of their places within the structure, nearly half said their parents saw few to no consequences for themselves. Many reported that their parents believed that most others were similar to themselves. The following examples are typical.

*“My parents, to this day, have absolutely no awareness of class and the influences of class on their place in society. As far as they are*

concerned, everyone is the same as them and if you are different from them, well, there is something wrong with you.”

“My parents were not significantly aware of class positions in any manner that made this clear to the children. Further, in the community we lived there were few rich people and all classes in the community participated in the same institutions (churches, schools) and lived in the same general areas. There were few families to compare one’s self to and identify these as ‘rich’ or ‘poor’.”

. . . Given the pervasiveness of the dominant American ideology, it is no wonder that most of our respondents reported that their parents believed in the importance of individual achievement and self-motivation. Few respondents reported that their parents recognized any sort of systematic discrimination based on socioeconomic status or social class. In fact, in some cases, there was a certain kind of pride associated with belonging to the working-class. The following is a good example of this.

“ . . . I should add that being working-class in (my hometown) carried with it no shame. You were proud to be working-class. You felt yourself to be strong and to be part of a strong breed, i.e., northern working-class. (My hometown) was built on the labor of the skilled working-class and my father was part of that class.”

## Weighing the Effects of Race, Gender, and Class

. . . The effects of racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination cross both class and gender lines. Having the experience of racial discrimination adds an important element to the equation and modifies the experience of growing up working-class. One such modification is illustrated in the following quote from an Hispanic respondent as he explains how his father instilled suspicion of the white middle-class.

“They spoke of class only in economic terms and say the system as ‘haves’ versus the ‘have-nots.’ My dad often told me to always watch a smiling white guy because they all cheat. He saw the haves as crooked but said he would never steal as ‘most whites who are rich do.’ ”

The effects of the intersection of gender and class are the focus of Barker's recent (1995) paper. She defines gender as carrying implied limitations within its labels (e.g., men are "naturally" smarter than women, etc.). The negative connotations associated with femininity that are present for all academics are added to the disadvantage of class background for women from working-class families. This, coupled with the expectations that women face from working-class families (i.e., that she "owes" it to her family to remain connected and supportive) generate different results for academic women from working-class backgrounds than it does for similar men. The bottom line is that these factors combine to produce a climate within which women from working-class backgrounds find it especially challenging to perform the necessary requirements to gain entry and acquire legitimacy within primarily upper middle-class, male-dominated institutions of higher learning.

The early-childhood socialization experiences of the women in our study lend support to this. The first example illustrates the implicit preference for males in working-class families:

*"Since I was the oldest child (and only child for about nine years), I participated in ALL business and farm work: milking, field work . . . dressing turkeys, gathering and sorting and packing fruits and vegetables for sale on the routes, helping with books and often responsible for checks. . . My father often said that he had wished for a boy as his first child, but that I was [as] good as any boy would have been!"*

The following is a typical scenario for girls in working-class families:

*"I was expected, as the oldest girl child, to baby-sit the younger children, clean house every week, do dishes, cook, help can food, mow the lawn, rake the leaves. Since I was a girl, it did not matter that I was in high school sports and held a part-time job, I was still expected to do my work around the house on top of everything else."*

In addition to the expectation that girls will take on a larger share of domestic responsibilities, there are expectations that girls will pursue particular occupational paths. Note the following example:

*". . . I was told that my options were nurse, teacher, nun, mommy, or secretary, and since I would ultimately be 'just' a mommy anyway, any of the others would do (except nun of course!). One distant cousin was held out as an ideal to emulate; her secretarial job was with an airline, so she got to travel—it was thought that might satisfy my craving for*

*something more/else. There were also strong messages to never move far away (2 hours distant was considered very far), since family, relatives, etc., were the most important thing. Two of my cousins were offered complete athletic scholarships one state (about 3 hours) away, and my aunt and uncle made them turn them down because they didn't want them to move away from home. When I finally left home to go to graduate school, I felt guilty as hell!"*

The effects of gender thus intensify the difficulty for women in leaving their working-class origins. Girls in working-class families are instilled with similar levels of (limited) class culture as their male peers but with the added expectations that accompany socialization into working-class womanhood.

## Conclusion: Caught in the Middle

In this paper, we have begun to explore the childhood recollections of a group of sociologists from working-class backgrounds. These individuals were socialized to assume a place within the working-class and many have experienced a particular kind of angst alongside their upward class-mobility. They have experienced a form of culture shock not unlike that experienced by travelers in a foreign land. Similar to Ryan and Sackrey's metaphor of "strangers in paradise," these respondents have described how their successes have often been accompanied by ambivalence and uncertainty. In the process of "making something" of themselves, they have moved into an ambiguous "middle," no longer working-class but not comfortably middle-class either.

By considering separately the three states of cultural capital that Bourdieu defines, the source of anxiety for academics from working-class backgrounds becomes more clear. . . . Though one has acquired the requisite institutionalized capital (i.e., the degree), not having sufficient embodied capital makes it difficult to participate fully in the consumption of objectified capital and creates a sense of status inconsistency. The insecurity that accompanies the "impostor" syndrome is common as academics from working-class backgrounds try to bridge the gap between their past and present lives.

In fact, in a myriad of subtle ways, working-class culture prepares the next generation of workers to voluntarily assume their positions in the hierarchy (Willis 1977). Culture is indeed what Wuthnow refers to as the ". . . expressive dimension of social structure. . ." (1987:13).

Culture offers meaning; it provides the process for internalizing the social structure and coming to see the status quo as natural, something that “feels right.” Since a large part of the content of working-class culture is antithetical to scholarly pursuit, having grown up in an environment that assumes the “naturalness” of working-class values presents a conflict for intellectuals from such backgrounds. The conflict is, for many, deep and aching, lingering long after they have become, objectively, members of the middle-class. Socialization within a class culture is perhaps not as “determinant in the reproduction of the social structure” as Bourdieu implied (1983:253). It is possible to achieve upward mobility in this society; the lives of professional sociologists from working-class backgrounds attest to that. It is much more difficult, however, to “become” middle-class—to experience middle-class existence in a way that “feels right.” It is this lingering difficulty that academics from working-class backgrounds experience as a feeling of being “caught in the middle.”

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## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do the authors mean by “contradictions” in this article?
2. Under what circumstances could a person escape the effects of their social class and move to another with ease? Can you think of examples where this has occurred?