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Trailer Park Kids: An Ethnographic Study Of Identity Formation In An Affluent Suburban Middle School

Jeanne Marie Vanlaan
Wayne State University,

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**TRAILER PARK KIDS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
IDENTITY FORMATION IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

by

JEANNE MARIE VANLAAN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2018

MAJOR: Curriculum and Instruction

Approved By:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to many people. The first is my mother, Lily Mae Weaver, who died at the beginning stages of this writing. When my mother was alive, I frequently shared with her how much she had taught me. I want to thank my mother one more time for teaching me the value of resilience.

The second group of people are my three sons; Adam, Zack, and Josh; who had no choice but to come with me on the journey through higher education. For the past 23 years, they have encouraged and supported my education, often at great personal sacrifice.

Lastly, I dedicate this writing to my oldest granddaughter, Lily Rae, who was born 51 days after the passing of my mother. Life narratives are part of what binds families together across generations. I look forward to the day when Lily is a little bit older and I can share stories about her great grandmother with her.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and mentoring of my dissertation chair, Dr. Thomas Pedroni. His ability to deepen my thinking about what I found in the field was invaluable. At times when my confidence wavered, he reminded me that he believed this research could influence future studies that focused on students living in manufactured home communities, and their teachers. Through meetings, phone calls, and comments on my multiple drafts, Dr. Pedroni taught me how to write for this purpose.

I am grateful for my dissertation committee who patiently signed and resigned paperwork when deadlines were looming. More importantly, their offering of specific readings, research direction and writing adjustments helped guide my work for the past 18 months. Dr. Monte Piliasky, Dr. Christopher Robbins, and Dr. Min Yu thank you for your guidance, support and encouragement.

Motivation for this dissertation came from the research participants. Each time I sat with participants for interviews, I was humbled by their willingness to share their lives with me. All participants graciously answered questions, and often, pondered their answers to questions right along with me. Opening up your home, classroom, and life to a researcher is difficult. For the students, parents, and teachers who participated in this study I am forever grateful.

Thanks to Wendy Darga who took the time to read multiple drafts of this dissertation. She offered unfiltered critique that assisted me in honestly examining my bias. We had many conversations during which she questioned my interpretations of data and caused me to refine my thinking.

A second reader, Wendy Beitel, picked up the phone countless times during this process to hear me read my work. Her support during this process was beyond measure. Wendy felt that this work may assist in making school a more promising place for the students from Waldenburg Acres and other lower income children attending suburban schools elsewhere.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge Dr. Richard Pipan, who, in 1997, gave me Jean Anyon's "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work." My interest in the influence of social class and school began when I read that work. Additionally, many faculty members during my undergraduate work were inspirational. As a young, recently widowed mother of three sons, it was uncomfortable for me to accept what my professors said about my thinking and my writing. Their constant affirmation that perhaps, I might have something to add to the field of public education, helped me through sleepless nights of completing assignments on time, while my children slept. Thank you to Dr. Richard Pipan, Dr. Dyanne Tracy, and Dr. Robert Wiggins for believing in me at such an early place in my studies. Also, many thanks to Dr. Carolyn O'Mahony also offered important support during my dissertation writing process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND SETTING THE TONE

*They must be from the trailer park. They smell like smoke.
They have a dog. But they're on free lunch.*

(Personal Communication, Mason Elementary School Teacher, 2005)

This is a study of middle school working class youth who attended a middle and upper-middle class, majority White middle school located in an outlying suburban area of metropolitan Detroit. The core group of participants in this study resided in a mobile home community and were commonly referred to by residents of the city and the research participants alike as *the trailer park kids*. Due to holding a minoritized social class status in the school they attend, the residents of the mobile home community learned to accept and participate in this labeling. Such acceptance and participation is not without complications. For the purpose of mirroring the articulations posed by the research participants, I use the term *trailer park* intermittingly throughout this research when referring to the residential area where participants who are the focus of this research reside. I also use the term, *trailer park kids*, in reference to the core research participants in this study, as well as in reference to the entirety of adolescents residing in the trailer park who are perceived homogenously by those living outside the trailer park. I acknowledge early on that *trailer park* has become a pejorative term. I use the term, *single-family home* to refer to single standing homes in suburban neighborhoods within the boundary limits of the same city as the trailer park. All names in this work pertaining to persons, schools, and cities are pseudonyms with the exception of the major metropolitan area, metropolitan Detroit, where this research takes place.

What follows is a study that explores the numerous complications implicit in the pejorative framing of a minoritized suburban community of youth as *the trailer park kids*. It is difficult to put your finger on why the designation of being from a trailer park holds such a damaging stigma. Historically, and in contemporary times, it is commonplace for the *trailer park* label to denote

something dirty, tenuous, and pathological. As with other contexts in which people living in poverty are understood within a pathological frame, there are many unknowns and unexamined assumptions that adhere to youth living in trailer parks for those of us who live outside them. This dissertation examines those unknowns by portraying intersecting lives where terms of identity formation among the trailer park kids are influenced strongly by their minority social class standing in both the school and the larger suburban community. A stark contrast exists between the trailer park neighborhood and the more affluent single-family home neighborhoods. Shadows of this contrast in neighborhoods seep through the school doors and take a prominent place in determining who is marginalized and who is not. The residents of the trailer park must navigate this perception of “otherness” daily. Equally as alarming, the way this “othering” permeates the school community promotes a marginalized and segregated existence during the school day.

Much research surrounding the complexities of social class and adolescent identity formation in schools has come before this study (e.g., Anyon, 1980, 1981; Fine, 1987; Lawler, 2005; Ogbu, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Weis, 1990, 2008; Willis, 1981), but it is rare to capture the essence of both the personal struggles and the sacrifices of students and their families who are marginalized due to the perceptions attached solely to their neighborhood. Gee (2000) explained the notion that by being excluded from the mainstream, one is actually included in an entirely different grouping. In this respect, we witness what Cope and Kalantis (2000) referred to as “absence is presence” (p. 123). When exclusion from the mainstream occurs, often it can be experienced as oppression that yields presence differently (Fischman & McLaren, 2000; Freire, 1970). For the trailer park kids, their oppressive circumstances in school could yield traits like anxiety, diversion, and exhaustion, which are most noticeable during the school day when surrounded by a student population that owns the hallways and other common spaces in the school.

Along with exploring the identity formation of the trailer park kids, this dissertation is a multi-layered narrative of the well-intended inclusionary practices of teachers towards the trailer park kids and their families. Even when teachers truly and deeply care about students, they unknowingly produce ill warranted results, including alienating curricular and social circumstances. Not experiencing the school day as the middle- and upper-middle class students contributes to social class reproduction for all students in the school, no matter the social class status. In this way, class analysis shows that perhaps equal objective capital in the form of school resources may not be sufficient to upset social reproduction for working class youth attending middle and upper middle-class schools (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Delpit, 1988, 1995; Holland, 2012; Ogbu, 2003; Willis, 1981).

The tensions between trailer park kids and the structure of middle- and upper-middle class schooling are frequently manifested through resistance, which this dissertation also documents and analyzes. Social class differences divide the student body, keeping middle- and middle-upper class students from mixing with trailer park kids. At the same time, this divide acts as a protective and isolating barrier for the trailer park kids. All participants play a part in the insular existence of the trailer park kids. In response to the de facto isolation and conflicting prospects of equal access to curriculum, trailer park kids often participate in covert acts of resistance.

The quote that began this chapter is an excerpt from one of the numerous conversations I have had over the past 16 years with educational colleagues, who referenced children and their families who lived in Waldenburg Acres (a pseudonym that I have given the manufactured home community that is a primary setting of this research) in unflattering ways. Typically, in most suburban public schools, teacher comments with similar tone and insinuations about trailer park kids and their families are met with little or no resistance. The inability to challenge the negative

comments from colleagues who disagree is a reflection of the power held by a prevalent misconception in the culture of suburban public school teaching: that trailer park parents do not care about their children or the education they receive; and that their assumed financial irresponsibility is a cause of their unfortunate housing circumstances. If we remove the residual effects of such comments, what might be revealed are basic human rights: that trailer park kids have a right to own and love a dog; that they have a right to food; and that they cannot control the lifestyle habits of their parents any more than middle- and upper-middle class children. While denigrating comments by teachers such as this are likely not intended to be harmful towards students, in the end, the persistence of misconceptions they suggest works to perpetuate marginalization and contribute to the *othering* of the Waldenburg Acres students and their families.

What is reflected in the pejorative comments of teachers is a more serious divide between trailer park kids and their middle-class teachers than what might be apparent. Commonly misunderstood demarcations between working class and middle-class lives underpin such comments and the lack of teacher resistance to the same. Bourdieu (1986) referenced this perspective about the Waldenburg Acres residents as a lack of teacher understanding of the differential habitus of working class and middle-class lives. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of *habitus* anchors this work and adds a perspective of understanding in the following important ways:

Sociology treats as identical all biological individuals who, being the products of the same objective conditions, have the same habitus. A social class (in-itself) - a class of identical or similar conditions of existence and conditionings - is at the same time a class of biological individuals having the same habitus, understood as a system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditionings. Though it is impossible for all (or even two) members of the same class to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class. (pp. 59-60)

Furthermore, Dumais (2002) surmised:

Habitus is one's disposition, which influences the actions that one takes; it can even be manifested in one's physical demeanor, such as the way one carries one's self or walks. It is generated by one's place in the social structure; by internalizing the social structure and one's place in it, one comes to determine what is possible and what is not possible for one's life and develops aspirations and practices accordingly. This internalization takes place during early childhood and is a primarily unconscious process. (p. 46)

The lack of sensitivity and awareness toward the contrasting habitus between the Waldenburg Acres students and their teachers is most troubling when we consider the relationship between what people say and their core beliefs. Indeed, these beliefs may be due to a lack of awareness on the part of teachers toward trailer park kids' lives, coupled with the unique pressure around conflicting habitus teachers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may themselves feel when teaching in a suburban middle- and upper-middle class school. Suburban teachers are not alone in their limited knowledge of and difficulty navigating social class difference; the consciousness of most Americans of anything more than surface level manifestations of social class difference in the United States appears to be our true hidden curriculum. Whether we like to admit it or not, we live in economically stratified worlds. Developing a better understanding of the difference in life worlds and working to interrogate common perceptions and myths about working class families living in mobile home communities is one of the core purposes of this research.

Defining Class

Defining class has much to do with the depth of the differentiation within the forms of capital that people and groups in society possess. In addition to habitus, Bourdieu's (1986) conception of various forms of social and cultural capital provides a foundation upon which class standing and levels of successful navigation of societal institutions among "agents" can be understood. Establishing the *classes* and the orientation to classes upon which this dissertation is

based is necessary. The Marxist economic classification of proletariat (working-class) and bourgeois (middle-class) are in tune with this work and are terms that categorically group the main participants in this study. I define *working class, middle class and upper middle class* by borrowing from a blend of the contributions of scholarly work and my own life experience in spending the better part of the past two decades teaching children from extremes in the incidence of whether they were born into economic privilege.

In establishing a more humane and nuanced look at defining poverty, Lister (2004) opted to shed the absolute. Claiming that by using absolutes, we tend to “ghettoize” poverty and ignore wide variations within such groupings. Lister (2004) looked at poverty in relative terms as a key concept to assist in turning attention away from policy that mandated definitions based on yearly income for a family of four. It is with this mind frame that I write terms like *economic privilege* because that is relative to location, space, and time. For this work, in writing about children and a community that I know, the economic placeholder of working class is where the majority of trailer park kids are placed by me. Both Lister (2004) and Gorski (2013) shared their ideas that temporary dips into relative poverty that are experienced by working class families, occur when unforeseen life circumstance requires the shift of sparse resources from an area of basic need to an urgent and pressing necessity. These circumstances can be like the common and debilitating toothache experienced by a child who has gone without dental care. I refer to Gorski (2013) who in writing about teaching children from poverty in the United States, defined working class families in a way that reflected the economic lives of the trailer park kids:

Working class people generally are able to afford their most basic necessities, but only at a subsistence level. They make just enough money to get by and, as a result, are unable to save money or accumulate wealth. This leaves working class people and families in a precarious position, balancing on the brink of poverty. (p. 9)

Most of the families who live in the trailer park are unable to pay their monthly living expenses with ease, or without letting one expense go to stay current in another. Many trailer park kids participate in the free and reduced lunch program at school. My choice to ignore absolutes based on the arbitrary nature of outdated policy speaks to the ethnographic nature of this work. Within the context of hearing about the struggles to afford the necessities of life without worry, the trailer park kids are not only defined, but contrasted to the middle- and upper- middle class lives of the majority of students attending their school.

Gorski (2013) established a precedent for defining social class that linked the anchoring of membership in social class to the idea of what would happen if a wage earner were out of work for a length of time or if other unforeseen financial hurdles interrupted the normal flow of life. These perimeters were used to place the middle class families in this study; specifically, they have the ability to withstand unforeseen hurdles without having an influence on their current quality of life. For the middle class, however, this wealth distribution adjustment cannot be sustained for months on end without movement into a working-class status, even if it is temporary (Gorski, 2013). By contrast, upper-middle class families in this study are defined as families who lack a concept of what a financial hurdle may be in terms of subsistence. The needs of upper-middle class families are met, in ways that trailer park residents may perceive as unnecessary excess. Since the locus of identification in this research is residence, the upper-middle class live in single-family homes that are more than 4,000 square feet on the small end and they most likely, have vacation homes that may or may not be in Northern Michigan. While financial stress fully interrupts the security of working class lives and temporarily interrupts the security of middle class lives, financial stress for the upper-middle class means choosing different luxuries, such as a different vacation location for the family. The difference is striking when moving along a not so neatly

packed continuum of subsistence needs to luxury choices. The amount and types of cultural and social capital possessed by individual families contribute to the packed and diverse continuum in ways that shape identities of students attending school with others coming from a wide range of social class membership.

According to Bourdieu (1986), each class and the agents within each class possess variations in the amount and type of both cultural and social capital. Cultural capital is a bit more complex than social capital in that Bourdieu (1986) categorized cultural capital into three unmistakable forms: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. *Embodied cultural capital* is the type of capital that is handed down and not directly seen and is the ability to recognize and understand the significance of cultural goods. *Objectified cultural capital* is what has been handed down to you, or what you possess in terms of material goods. Unlike embodied cultural capital, objective cultural capital can be seen and has a monetary value. *Institutionalized cultural capital* can be viewed as the competencies and credentials gained from social institutions, such as school or membership in a country club. Bourdieu (1986) argued that institutionalized cultural capital has a high degree of conversion since ‘degreed agents’ can convert their institutionalized capital into economic capital. In turn, this gain in economic capital shifts the amount and type of objectified cultural capital held by the agent. Stronger relationships with the right kind of capital can directly influence the upward mobility of life trajectories.

Social capital, conversely, indicates “membership in a group” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250). The amount and type of cultural capital possessed can contribute to membership in particular groups. Cultural and social capital intimately connect to one another in a mutually influential and evolving relationship. Social capital holds that certain norms and expectations are included with being a member of a group. Memberships in elite groups bring benefits through the acquisition of

powerful and varied types of cultural capital. Certain group memberships, like being a student in a school, are required by law. We shall see later in this work how attending school with a mismatch of the social and cultural capital called for in the social field of school creates social subgroups, as well as lessens the likelihood of upsetting social class reproduction for trailer park kids, and ensures the non-interruption of social class reproduction for middle class students (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Collins, 2009; Reay, 2001).

Peer Group Membership

In addition to where one lives, one's habitus, and one's relationship to forms of capital, the ultimate social-class marker of being in the disadvantaged group for suburban public schoolchildren is if students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Some of us paid attention, or might have noticed who "bought" everyday in school. This awareness is still commonplace in schools. Foucault (2012) referenced this attention paying and termed it surveillance in his work that linked uninterrupted power and control to dynamics of marginalized lives, mainly those in prison. The current world of suburban public schools is not different from decades ago. Students are aware of which students eat breakfast at school each day, and likewise, which ones do not bring their lunch to school. I am not meaning to overstate surveillance conducted by schoolchildren and teachers about information that is legally supposed to be kept private. I intend to demonstrate that when people, both young and old, are confined to a space with a familiar routine and power differentials, they notice what others do and where they fit. Social class markers, like free or reduced lunch, are important in middle schools, like the one at the center of this study: they make one suspect for membership in a social class that readily carries with it a marginalized social status, just like living in a trailer park does. Any attempt to say that this is not true is disingenuous. Bourdieu (1987) argued that having a sense of place and a sense of others, along with "habitus experienced in the

form of person attraction or revulsion” is the essence of relationships (p. 5). Economic status comes into play when decisions about peer group membership and identity formation are teased out and solidified in the middle school years.

Larimer and Larimer Heights

One of the key settings for this dissertation is a trailer park (Waldenburg Acres) that sits on the outskirts of the city limits of Larimer Heights. Another key setting is Kearney Middle School, located on a trajectory approximately six or seven miles diagonally northwest of Waldenburg Acres. These key settings are part of the larger communities of Larimer and Larimer Heights. Both cities are located approximately 30 minutes north of Detroit, in Fairfield County. Known for its historical downtown-shopping district, the city of Larimer is an interesting mix of the old and the new. Local residents own most of the businesses downtown. Many downtown buildings have their original century old facades, including a pharmacy, which is housed in what used to be the Larimer Opera House that was built in 1890. The businesses are a mix of upscale retail and furniture stores, casual and more formal dining venues, and novelty shops. The longest running business is a family owned bakery that just passed its 85th year of serving the residents of Larimer, Larimer Heights, and Fairfield County.

During the winter holiday season, one community event garners local news coverage and is a thrill for a wide array of spectators, from locals to the neighboring communities. Shortly after Thanksgiving each year, the city of Larimer has a “Big, Bright Lights” celebration, with residents standing in the middle of Main Street for a one mile stretch to wait for one million holiday lights adorning the downtown business district to be turned on simultaneously at dusk. In addition to this celebration, other traditions include the annual Hometown Thanksgiving Day Parade (with over 100 floats), the January Fire and Ice Festival, and the fall Arts and Apples festival.

The entire city of Larimer is approximately four square miles in size. Larimer Heights is about 32 square miles in size. Within this combined area of nearly 36 square miles there are 25 churches, 1 university, 1 private college, 1 county community college, and 17 public schools in the city school district that serves both Larimer and Larimer Heights. On a map, Larimer Heights is a notable huge square with a carving out of a section, which is the city of Larimer. The residents rarely draw a distinction between living in Larimer or Larimer Heights; rather, they think of themselves as one community with shared traditions.

Larimer Heights was established as Brookstone Township in 1835. By 1869, the city of Larimer was incorporated as a village within Brookstone Township. In 1967 Larimer Village became a city, Larimer. Five years later, the city of Larimer wanted to annex the remainder of Brookstone Township, but the Michigan Boundary Commission denied this request. In 1974 a petition for consolidation for the City of Larimer and Brookstone Township was defeated by 350 votes. A different petition was approved in 1974 that annexed 2.2 square miles of Brookstone Township to the city of Larimer. Residents of Brookstone Township presented numerous challenges to the annexation. This battle in the courts continued until 1981, when Brookstone Township was ordered to surrender the property to the city of Larimer. In 1984, Brookstone Township voters approved a city charter, and Brookstone Township officially became known as the City of Larimer Heights.

Residents of both Larimer and Larimer Heights are actively engaged in local politics, as expected of the middle, upper-middle, and elite economic classes; meaning that they insert their social and cultural capital in influential ways concerning civic and school matters. The Larimer Heights website reports that CNN Money Magazine ranked Larimer Heights within the top 10

places to live in the United States (i.e., 9th place out of 780 American cities with populations between 50,000 and 300,000).

According to the US Census Bureau, the median home value in Larimer Heights in 2013 was \$212,700. The median annual household income in Larimer Heights in 2013 was \$78,160. Also reported in 2013, the residents of Larimer Heights were White (80.0%), Black or African American (4.5%), Asian (10.5%), Hispanic or Latino (3.1%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.2%), and two or more races (1.9%). For the years 2009-2013, 6.7% of Larimer Heights residents lived below the poverty level. Ninety five percent of the residents who were age 25 or older had at least a high school diploma or a higher education credential. The majority of people (51.7%) had completed a baccalaureate degree or higher. Eighteen percent of people living in Larimer Heights spoke a language other than English at home, and 15.6% of the residents were foreign born (www.census.gov).

Larimer Heights Schools is the school district for the city of Larimer and the city of Larimer Heights. During their elementary school years, the children from Waldenburg Acres attend Mason Elementary, located in the neighborhood directly behind the heart of downtown Larimer. This neighborhood is home to a centrally located and rather large cemetery with graves of soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War. The cemetery is surrounded by homes that range in price from \$2,000,000 for new construction to the century old, 800 square foot homes with a minimal \$200,000 price tag. Gravel alleys still exist in the neighborhood, with original homes having detached garages that were once carriage houses accessed by alleyways.

Prior to the last redistricting, in the 2002-2003 school year, Waldenburg Acres students had attended the elementary school closest to Kearney Middle School. For years, a rumor in the community was that when Larimer Heights Schools redistricted in 2002-2003, single-family home

parents presented a case to the Board of Education to have the Waldenburg Acres students moved from the elementary school their children attended. This resulted in the Waldenburg Acres students attending Mason, which was similar in distance from their neighborhood to two other elementary schools in the district. Many families that buy new homes downtown use school of choice to move their children to other elementary schools within the Larimer Heights district after they find out that that their children will attend elementary school with trailer park kids. Recently, the school district of Larimer Heights has made their school of choice policy more stringent to avoid parent selection of schools based on this reasoning and to block single-family home students from leaving Mason Elementary School. The outside community appears be cognizant of where the students from Waldenburg Acres are attending school.

The northern area of Larimer Heights has rolling hills and dense wooded acreage, where many homes are tucked away, accessed only by gravel embedded and tree lined roads. Four elementary schools, Kearney Middle School, and one high school are located on the north end of Larimer Heights. Once a large agricultural community, Larimer Heights has transformed over the past four decades into many upscale single-family mini-mansion communities, resting alongside the older neighborhoods with their aluminum sided homes and wrap around porches. Mini-mansions is a term first coined by the trailer park kids during interviews. I defined their term, mini mansions, as homes of at least 4,000 square feet.

The northwestern section of Larimer Heights is the site of newer residential developments. Many of these developments are gated communities with homes that exceed the modest 4,000 square foot definition of mini-mansion communities that are nearer to Waldenburg Acres. A section of this area of Larimer Heights is referred to as “millionaire mile,” due to home values.

Many professional athletes, high-powered corporate automobile executives, physicians, surgeons, stockbrokers, private business owners, and attorneys have homes in the area.

Another gated community located on the other side of town differs from “millionaire mile.” No actual gate surrounds Waldenburg Acres. The gate is invisible, but exists. Contrary to the tangible gates on the other side of town, this invisible trailer park gate serves a different purpose. The gates on mini-mansion neighborhoods keep people from the outside away, while the Waldenburg Acres invisible gates keep the trailer park residents in their neighborhood. Gates are barriers that mark a lifestyle, a relationship to economic capital, and a stigma (Low, 2008). The negative stigma of living in one of the two mobile home communities in Larimer Heights (only one allows children) is as isolating as a tangible gate.

Waldenburg Acres

If you have never lived in a mobile home community, or do not know anyone who has, then I can assume that at least one familiar notion is held about mobile home communities. People have seen spring weathercasts that show the aftermath of tornadoes that have struck throughout the Midwestern United States. Following these storms, the media seem to report on an inordinate number of mobile home communities that have been damaged by tornadoes and other inclement weather conditions. The devastation is always extreme because of the fragile nature of living quarters that sit on a metal frame, anchored by latching the frame to large metal hooks that are secured in the earth, or into a slab of cement. As the camera shows the remnants of the community, viewers rarely stop to consider who lives in mobile home communities and what life is like for the people who live there.

Waldenburg Acres is on the farthest southeastern border shared with neighboring cities of Larimer to the north and Trackton to the east. This eastern border is the cut-off line for the school

enrollment between Larimer Heights Schools and Upton Community Schools. Students living on the west side of the border, Deerfield Road, attend Larimer Heights Schools. Students who live east of Deerfield Road attend Upton Community Schools. This location places Waldenburg Acres on the farthest possible outskirts of town, nearer to marketplaces, medical facilities, and shopping centers in Trackton than in Larimer or Larimer Heights.

The approach to Waldenburg Acres is fast. When traveling toward the southeast section of town, right before crossing Deerfield Road into Trackton, Waldenburg Acres appears just around the curve of the road used to exit town in this area. When entering the trailer park, noticing the sheer numbers of mobile homes and their variation in size, style, age, and upkeep is striking. The website for Waldenburg Acres boasts that the community is located within the Larimer Heights School District no less than three times and is the first item listed on the bulleted amenity list. The owners of Waldenburg Acres know how to attract families looking for a chance to own their own home and send their children to good suburban schools.

Each household has to pay to the owner of the park lot rent on a monthly basis. In exchange for lot rent, residents have, on average, a 60 x100 foot lot on which their home is located, access to an outdoor pool supervised by attendants who are not certified life guards, a workout room that has four barely working cardio-machines, an outdoor blacktop area with a basketball hoop at one end, a playground with damaged and graffiti tagged equipment, a clubhouse that can be rented for special occasions, and enrollment in Larimer Heights Schools. Residents are responsible for cutting their own grass and removing their own snow from their driveways and entrance patios. For these amenities, residents pay a base rent of \$596.00 per month, not including their water bill that is tacked onto lot rent. In addition, families are also charged a \$4.00 monthly school fee for each school-aged child, a \$10.00 fee for each pet, and a \$20.00 fee if you have a corner lot.

The community includes 775 homes, and occasionally visitors traveling through the trailer park come across empty lots. These empty lots are the result of foreclosures or the park has removed the home if it was vacant, dated, or in need of serious repair. Foreclosures in trailer parks sometimes involve removing the home, while the on-site reality company might buy back homes that are in foreclosure way under market value if they are a newer model year. At the time of this writing, Waldenburg Acres had five empty lots. Equal in number were new “spec homes” placed in the park by the owners and being sold by the on-site reality company along with an offer of three years free lot rent. Some residents are economically seduced by the offers of free lot rent upon moving into the community, which is a powerful tactic to draw people who are deciding if they can afford a mobile home in an economically elite area.

Kearney Middle School

The panel also notes that poorer children do not tend to bring the top kids down. “It is more likely that the high-achieving kids will bring the others up.” But the truth is that few middle-class parents in Chicago, or in any other city, honestly believe this. They see the poorer children as a tide of mediocrity that threatens to engulf them.

(Jonathan Kozol, 1991, p.61)

Kearney Middle School opened in the fall of 1991 to meet the intense population growth of Larimer Heights from the 1980s that lasted nearly through the first decade of the 21st century. The population growth of Larimer Heights hit its peak in 2000. The Larimer Heights School District anticipated this growth and built Kearney on a scale large enough to house the steady population growth on the North end of town. Kearney Middle School is host to the largest student population of all middle schools in Fairfield County.

The school was named after Patrick A. Kearney, a democrat who served as a U.S. senator representing Michigan. The naming of this 1991 state of the art school was unusual as Larimer Heights is a staunchly conservative community. Kearney Middle School is no longer state of the

art. While the outside of the school is pleasant enough, the inside is sterile and harsh looking, kind of prison like, with interior brick walls that make it difficult to display student work. The school is overcast and dark inside, with little chance for natural light to enter from anywhere other than the exterior classrooms with their modest windows. The rest of the school is dimly lit, with florescent lights that have little effect on the dark brick interior adorned with countless rows of alternating hunter green, dark brown, and tan painted lockers. A remarkable physical feature of Kearney Middle School is the size of the building, where nearly 1,200 students attend in grades 6-8. The school has two courtyards visible from either select classrooms, the media center, or the hallway tracing the transparent glass view of the school cafeteria.

Fifty-eight teachers comprise the faculty at Kearney. In addition, five full time ancillary staff (psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, learning consultant, and teacher consultant), three counselors, five full-time paraprofessionals, three part-time paraprofessionals, three full time secretaries, one part time secretary, two assistant principals, and one principal also are assigned to the building. The school is well staffed and nearly all classrooms are at full capacity with 36 students. Class size is a recent shift for a school district that in the past was not concerned with maximum number of students in classrooms. Community pressures to balance the district budget have dictated this new emphasis. As a result, each general education teacher at Kearney has an average of 30 more students to teach per day than in prior years. It remains to be seen what the peripheral effects of this maximum class size mandate could do to the school community.

Most of the professionals at Kearney have completed a graduate degree, with 92% of the teachers earning a master's degree, and another 15% of that number earning specialist degrees. Four staff members have been at Kearney since it opened, and nine faculty members started at Kearney in the first five years after opening. The average number of years of teaching among the

faculty is 16 years, making for a very experienced faculty. The average number of years that teachers have taught at Kearney was 11 years, which indicates low faculty turnover.

Experienced Kearney teachers have remarked in casual conversation that 10 or 20 years ago, students from Waldenburg Acres were from good families. Observations by long-term Kearney teachers indicated that in the first 10 years Kearney was open, the Waldenburg Acres students earned high marks, paid attention, and completed their schoolwork. Pointing to more social problems, veteran teachers at Kearney claim to have noticed a change in the students from Waldenburg Acres in the past 10 years. Increased standardization and accountability in schools came during the perceived transition of the student make-up from Waldenburg Acres. In Michigan, knowing that 40% of teacher evaluations are based on results of student growth as determined by high stakes tests, teachers have felt an increased pressure to have students perform well on tests. Most teachers at Kearney do not want to spend their teaching energy helping students score well on high stakes tests. Many Kearney teachers miss being able to focus on building strong relationships with their students.

Objective and Research Questions

School as an enduring vehicle for social class transcendence, has been part of our national fiber ever since Horace Mann first postulated the common school as the *great equalizer of the conditions of men* (Twelfth Annual Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education, 1848). This American narrative provides assurance that working-class students who attend middle- and upper-middle class schools should be able to improve their economic status. Perhaps this is where the difficulty lies and where a compelling case needs to be argued. When school resources are equal; an assumption exists that discrimination based on social class status is eliminated. The belief is that equal access to middle- and upper-middle class schools with adequate resources creates

equality of opportunity for all students in attendance. To some parents of students from Waldenburg Acres, this promise of equality of opportunities that are offered to middle-and upper-middle class students is their reason for living within the Larimer Heights School District. In past conversations, many parents shared that they selected Waldenburg Acres over other lower rent communities, knowing in advance the huge family financial sacrifice they would face, so that their children could attend Larimer Heights Schools. What I hope to uncover is whether the absence of social and cultural capital expected in middle- and upper-middle class suburban schools is powerful enough to block working class students from being able to move beyond their birth social class status.

The questions that bind this research to various narratives of life in suburban middle- and upper middle-class schools are as follows:

1. What are the differences in the perspectives of middle school students who experience social segregation because of occupying an inferior social class standing to their peers? Additionally, in what ways might the interpretation of social segregation influence adolescents' identity formation situated by the possession of a diminished social class standing?
2. To what extent does the positioning of working-class students by teachers as unable to participate in school at levels equal to their more economically advantaged peers affect the prospect of social reproduction?
3. How do themes of resistance, exhibited by all participant groups, assist in the articulation of misunderstood perceptions and class analysis?

Answers to these questions are expected to contribute to existing research on essential understandings of class analysis when layered upon the mix of working class and middle-and

upper-middle class students in joint, yet segregated, attendance at a middle- and upper-middle class suburban middle school.

Considering the limits of the class analysis research pool, attention to the lives of working class students who live in a suburban trailer park and attend a suburban middle-and upper-middle class schools are nonexistent. Published research about youth involving social class to explore the mix of lives when working class, middle class, and upper-middle class students attend school together is sparse. Leading the field of research in social class and schools, academics have helped us to understand what happens in schools based upon homogeneous student body social class standing (Anyon,1980, 1981; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011; Willis, 1981). The expectation that equal access to middle- and upper-middle class suburban schools could increase the likelihood of social class disruption for working class youth living inside middle- and upper-middle class city limits might be contrary to what happens.

At the time of the study, 245 trailer parks were in three counties that are part of metropolitan Detroit. Of this number, two trailer parks are in Larimer Heights and one of the two restricts residence to senior citizens. In comparison with the rest of the tri-county area, this statistic results in the Waldenburg Acres community and the middle school students who live there being more of a stigmatized stand-out. Given that mobile homes account for 7.4% of the housing market in the United States, a need exists to conduct research that addresses the intricacies of schoolchildren living in trailer park communities.

Organization of Dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation provides an overview of the differences and similarities in students at a single middle school in a middle- and upper-middle class area. Chapter two presents the theory and literature that are used to support these differences and similarities. The third chapter

includes the methodology that was used to conduct this ethnographic research. The fourth chapter provides insight in the lives of the students and parents who participated in the study, with the findings of the data analysis presented in the fifth chapter. A discussion of the findings and associated literature, along with recommendations and implications are included in the sixth chapter.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

I hope your summer is off to a good start and you are able to spend some time enjoying the break outside of the building. I hate to bother you over the summer but my wife ---- and I just got the letter postmarked June 16th alerting us that ---- was going to be placed in the remedial math program next year and would have to give up an elective to do so. This note is to inform you/your staff that ----- and I do not want ---- put in that program. We will continue to provide ---- with additional math help via private tutors for 6th grade and beyond. Please adjust --- - schedule back to a normal day with his chosen electives and please confirm that has been done so we don't have to worry about it over the summer. Obviously, feel free to contact me via email or via phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx should further discussion be necessary to revert ---- back to a normal 6th grade course/elective schedule.

*Thanks,
(Personal Communication, 6/26/16)*

Like, um, they'll just like talk about how they have like way more money and like they bought like their shoes are \$300 and yours are \$30. And they're just like talking a bunch of crap about it and they go around saying how poor you are.

(Gwen Radcliff, Personal Interview, 04/19/17)

This chapter presents a review of literature regarding the complexities of social class and schools. The above quotes provide a backdrop of the contents of this chapter. The power and privilege in students from single-family homes juxtaposed with the trailer park kids is the core essence of this literature review.

First, this literature review examines the impact of social class on the identity formation of working-class youth. Parallels could be drawn in connecting research on the identity formation of working class students to students residing in a trailer park and attending a majority White, middle- and upper middle-class, suburban middle-school. Second, this literature review analyzes literature that aids in understanding resistance behaviors when the lives of working class students and middle and upper-middle class teachers intersect in school. Research from both the United States and the United Kingdom are included to review how acts of resistance by working class youth in other

settings can influence understanding resistance that might be demonstrated by the trailer park kids. Lastly, this literature review examines bodies of work that address the influence of social reproduction promoted in schools. Is it possible that students living in carved out spaces (like trailer parks, in middle- and upper middle-class suburbia) can change their life worlds by upsetting the expectation of social reproduction?

Critical Theory: Social Reproduction, Resistance, and Identity Formation

...much more effort must be given to ground the discourse of critical pedagogy in the concrete struggles of multiple and identifiable groups. Much of it needs to be considerably less dismissive of previous critical traditions that-rightly-continue to influence educational and cultural activists.

(Apple, 2006, p. 56)

The scope of critical theory includes vacillating attentions to various critical traditions, including those that are primary in this dissertation: identity formation, acts of resistance, and social reproduction (Apple, 2006; Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Tubman, 2008). This research does not reject the long-standing traditions of identity formation, acts of resistance, or social reproduction in class analysis; rather I draw on these three traditions as important understandings when exploring complications of living in a trailer park on the outskirts of upper-middle-class suburbia. In schools where trailer park kids have access to the same forms of institutionalized capital as the middle- and upper-middle class students, the elimination of the social class boundaries is expected among the working-class and middle and upper-middle class students. This might not be happening to the extent expected. One reason is the reproduction faction of critical theory. Contradictions that underlie the meritocratic tone in the national narrative hold substantial influences on the life trajectories of working class youth.

Social reproduction.

Concerning the last 25 years, criticisms of critical theory have centered upon what is referred to as the ‘overly deterministic’ nature of reproduction theory. Reproduction theory has always held a prominent place within critical theory. During the 1970s, it gained an even higher prominence when Althusser (2001) declared school and education as the primary *Ideological State Apparatus* of modern times, replacing the position of the church as the primary *Ideological State Apparatus*. With this transfer in prominence, the ideology of the ruling class became the ideology promoted in schools. Ideology being promoted in schools was evident in earlier times (Dewey 1916, 1997; Counts, 1932), but people did not take serious note of this ideology until the public school was recognized as the primary ideological apparatus over the church. According to Althusser (2001), a Capitalist ruling class ensures that schools can reproduce relations of production in the creation of “know how” skills. Students are *ejected* from the educational system at various times to fill the “know how” need of the workforce. The point when students leave the educational system to become workers determines their relationship to the means of production, as either taking part (knowingly or unknowingly) in exploiting others or being exploited. The contradiction of believing in meritocracy in comparison with the experience of school (the primary state apparatus) may be what could hinder trailer park kids from exceeding social reproduction.

The publication of *Schools in Capitalist America* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) extended the analysis of the reproductive influence of Capitalism in schools by highlighting at length the connections between schooling and social reproduction:

...the educational system does not add to or subtract from the overall degree of inequality and repressive personal development. Rather, it is best understood as an institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life through which these patterns are set, by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force. This role takes a variety of forms. Schools legitimate inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote

students, and allocate them to distinct positions in the occupational hierarchy. (p. 11)

During the 1970s, the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) positioned reproduction theory in the forefront of ushering into consciousness the discrepancy between the promise of meritocracy and the reality of social class reproduction. Bowles and Gintis found a correspondence between what happens in schools and patterns in relations of dominance and oppression in the larger Capitalist system. Correspondence theorists, (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Apple, 1982, 1999; Bourdieu, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McLaren 2015; Waller, 2011) exposed direct links between the curriculum and the workplace, the structure of family and the structure of schools, and the type of capital legitimized in school settings. Of interest in this work is the added dimension in class analysis from reproduction of the means of production, to social reproduction, or exiting the primary ideological state apparatus (school) occupying the same social class status held upon entering.

Resistance.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

(Marx, 2000, p. 246)

The call for agency in the literature predated the evolution of class analysis that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Absorption of *past* critical perspectives informs *present* perspectives on critical class analysis. Contrary to presentations of standards of critical theory, social reproduction and acts of resistance were not considered mutually exclusive from one another. The contiguous nature of social reproduction and acts of resistance are engrained in the traditional tenets of critical class analysis. Counts (1932) appealed to teachers of his day to resist:

...on all genuinely crucial matters the school follows the wishes of the groups or classes that actually rule society; on minor matters the school is sometimes allowed a certain measure of freedom. But I should say that teachers, if they could increase

sufficiently their stock of courage, intelligence, and vision, might become a social force of some magnitude. (p. 25)

Counts invited teachers to consider enacting their agency for social change. His ideas were reflected in the work of other critical theorists (Althusser 2001; Apple, 1982, 1999; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McLaren, 2015). Counts called on teachers to seize power from social and political conservatives and use that power to create a liberated society. The passage of the years has not tempered resistance among the teaching profession. Teacher resistance continues, but not always in the way anticipated by Counts.

In contrast, teachers address the status quo by carrying meritocracy into the classroom daily. Teachers' autonomy in the classroom is compromised and in turn, the case for equality of opportunity among their students is compromised. The power differential between those who legislate what happens in schools and those who teach has increased exponentially since the time of Counts. In the second decade of the 21st century, some teachers feel powerless to effect change to either make their working lives or the lives of their students better. Acts of resistance by teachers do not typically take the form of organized resistance against the status-quo, as Counts would have preferred; rather they are single acts played out in classrooms daily where teachers resist in many ways.

Teachers live under the strain of the meritocratic system of school and teacher evaluation. The conditions under which they perform their professional duties are a closer reflection of the occupational conditions of the working class than the middle- and upper-middle classes. Students are forced to comply to demands of their teachers. The intensification of the work of teachers has increased since the time of Counts (Apple, 2009). Currently, all students are expected to make the grade, or teachers fear losing their jobs. Teachers react by forcing conformity of resistant students to raise their achievement levels. When students comply, teachers can feel safe for one more year

of employment. When students do not comply, they risk their teachers' alienation that is unlikely to influence the prospect of upsetting social reproduction. The following components of critical theory are relevant to this work: alienation, adhesion, and false consciousness.

Alienation.

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors.

(Freire, 1970, p. 36)

The construct of *alienation*, defined by Marx (2000) and expanded upon by Feire (1970), contributed to this research in important ways. Marx wrote of alienation in economic terms of the adult world of work, but his work is applicable to the youth in the world of school. In support of this, Crotty (1998) stated, "In keeping with the primacy he accords to the economic, it is economic alienation that Marx sees as the root of any other form that alienation may take" (p.121). The forms that alienation may take in the lives of working class students attending school with middle- and upper-middle class students emanated from three different Marxist concepts of alienation.

Alienation of the object is one form of alienation written about by Marx (2000) that is relevant to this research. Marx viewed the proletariat as having an externalized relationship (alienation) from the products of their labor. Therefore, he referred to this discrepancy between labor and its product as reflective of the extreme material disparity between the proletariat and the bourgeois:

Labour produces works of wonder for the rich, but nakedness for the worker. It produces palaces, but only hovels for the worker; it produces beauty, but cripples the worker; it replaces labour by machines but throws a part of the workers back to a barbaric labour and turns the other part into machines. It produces culture, but also imbecility and cretinism for the worker. (Marx, 2000, p. 88)

This form of alienation is viewed as a rejection of connectedness between labor and object that is further flawed by the lack of life relevance of the object to those who labored to produce it. Layering *alienation of the object* upon the experience of working class students in school, the relevance became apparent. The literature before this work has shown that many working class students have a similar absence of affinity to the products of their labor in school (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Willis, 1981). When students externalize the relationship between themselves and their schoolwork, the result is alienation of object. In this way, alienation of object surfaced as influencing the prospect of academic success in school.

Alienation of self is another form of alienation upon which Marx (2000) elaborated. When applied to the classed experience of school, alienation of object and alienation of self are closely related in that both result in disengagement from the curriculum and the work associated with school. However, a distinction exists between alienation of object and alienation of self. While the former focuses on the result of labor (grades), the latter attends to the process of production, the actual schoolwork itself. During the process of production, the worker becomes alienated to the process itself by recognizing that “His labour is not voluntary it is compulsory. It is not the satisfaction of a need” (Marx, 2000, p. 88). Marx’s analysis of the experience of the Capitalist worker is uninterrupted when applied to the experience of working class students in schools that are designed to serve the middle- and upper-middle classes in the United States. Prior research found that working class students did not adapt readily to the middle- and upper-middle class curriculum, or the purpose of school (Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011). Many working class students did not demonstrate behaviors that indicated a connection to the concept of grades in exchange for an easier economic life in their future (Anyon, 1981; Fine, 2003).

Alienation of man from man is the last form of alienation borrowed from Marx (2000) and assigned to this research. Marx viewed alienation of man from man as the natural and culminating consequence of the other forms of alienation (Marx, 2000):

An immediate consequence of man's alienation from the product of his work, his vital activity and his species-being, is the alienation of man from man. When man is opposed to himself, it is another man who is opposed to him. What is valid for the relationship of man to his work, of the product of his work and himself, is also valid for the relationship of man to other men and of their labour and the objects of their labour. (p. 91)

Alienation of man from man occurs when economic relationships cause different types of alienation and compound themselves into social relationships reflected in alienation of man from man. This form of alienation can be deeply isolating for both the proletariat, as the subject of Marx's intention, and working class kids in school. Along with experiencing alienation of object (grades) and alienation of self (schoolwork), minority status students are also confronted with social alienation, or alienation of man from man, during their life in school (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). In this research I hope to determine if the trailer park kids experience alienation when attending a middle- and upper-middle class suburban school.

Adhesion.

Class works from the outside in, and from the inside out.

(Luttrell, 2008, p. 60)

Freire's (1970) concept of *adhesion* asserted that students and teachers are required to adhere to specific policies and procedures in school and have no choice but to adhere to these conditions. The work of teachers is increasing in intensity because of federal and state mandates to improve student achievement. Professional goals for teacher evaluations are dictated by the central administration of school districts. Mandated teacher's evaluation goals are imposed to promote school district coherence, resulting in a loss of teacher autonomy. Thus, an oppressive

working condition exists where the skills and knowledge of teachers are devalued and they experience a loss of professional freedom. Teachers that do not readily adapt by *adhering* to the decisions made by the central administration of their school district are prone to repercussions from administration. Teachers have no choice but to accept the argument that other “industries” work under systems of evaluation, based on productivity, so they should too. Teachers hear the message from the public and legislature that they should not think that they are immune from what has proven to be successful in the marketplace. Resisters learn to silence their discontent and eventually *adhere* to a less than favorable professional life.

Freire (1970) defined adhesion as:

This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of “adhesion” to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot “consider” him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him-to discover him “outside” themselves. (p. 28)

Likewise, the experience of an alienating curriculum might exist where working class students attend middle- and upper-middle class suburban schools. A need exists to explore how trailer park kids learn to adhere to school in an environment that fosters alienation.

False consciousness.

Possession of a false consciousness implies living in the world without being able to detect exploitive circumstances embedded within everyday events. Being made aware of the possession of false consciousness causes people to recognize the circumstances of their lives. Researchers (Brantlinger, 2009; Gee, 2000) demonstrated that middle-class students do not acknowledge, nor do they understand, that they enter school with an advantage due to their access to the types of capital expected in school. For working class students, possession of a false consciousness might mean a self-assessment of their own character as deficient (Bernstein, 1971). Marginalized groups in school have seen themselves as others see them (Fordham, 1996).

Identity formation.

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.

(Crotty, 1998, p.120)

In an examination of a working class high school in the UK, the rejection of a false consciousness was found to promote a binary social configuration among the students (Willis, 1981). The rejecting group, the 'lads' (the counter culture students in the school) demonstrated resistance towards school and thereby rejected adherence to a false consciousness. In contrast, adherence to a false consciousness was demonstrated by the 'er-oles' (students who were rule followers). The 'lads' rejection of the structure of school caused them to be perceived by others from a deficit perspective. By disrupting the flow of the school day, the 'lads' added tensions that were exhibited in ways that formed their identities opposite to the 'er-oles.' Willis (1981) recognized the influence of social class membership and the control it had on the overall function of the school day.

Commodification.

Wexler (1996) found that *commodification* was part of the school experience of working class students. In Marxist terms, a commodity is an object of production with two values: "use-value and exchange-value" (Marx, 2000, p. 462). Commodification, also referred to as *commodity fetishism* in a Capitalist system, subscribes to the notion of humans exploiting one another (Marx, 2000). Exploitation occurs through a downward spiral leading to the objectification of those at the bottom (Marx, 2000). In school, commodification of working class students is framed by Wexler (1996) as the perception of working class students as commodities. In other words, students are objects of the labor of teachers from whom they are alienated. This relationship between working class students and their teachers, as defined by Wexler (1996), is troubling, considering the contrast

in school experience of middle- and upper-middle class students and working class students. While middle- and upper-middle class students are able to practice a blend of themselves as extensions of the curriculum, working class students are more prone to being misunderstood as deviants who disrupt the school experience by their mistrust of the same school experience (Wexler, 1996). The work of Wexler may help understand the identity formation of the trailer park kids.

Literature Review

My review of the literature is divided into two segments. The first segment is an examination of the history of trailer parks in the United States. The economic conditions of trailer park living and the historically grounded social stigma associated with trailer park living is reported. The second segment analyzes the research that attends to identify formation, acts of resistance, and social reproduction in schools.

History of Trailer Parks

Imagining a time when there were no trailer parks in the United States is difficult. In comparison to single-family homes that have been part of the American landscape, manufactured home communities have spotted the rural, suburban and urban areas of the nation for roughly the past 65 years (Hart, Rhodes, & Morgan, 2002; Wallis, 1997). During the 1930s, trailer homes first hit the American market and were used by vacationing families. In the latter part of the 1930s, trailer homes became housing for migratory workers in many agricultural regions throughout the United States. The use of trailer homes as housing for migratory agricultural workers signified the beginning of trailer parks. From the very start of these rural trailer parks, concerns about overcrowding and unsanitary conditions colored perceptions of townspeople toward trailer park living (Aman & Yamal, 2010; Berbue, 1997; Kusenbach, 2009; MacTavish & Salamone, 2006; MacTavish, 2007; Miller, 1985).

The decade of the 1940s brought a second purpose for the growing proliferation of trailer parks in America. In the early years of the 1940s, two thousand trailer parks were located in the areas surrounding the American defense industry (Wallis, 1997). Newly hired industrial workers moved to urban areas to support efforts of American involvement in World War II. Most temporary defense workers needed housing, and trailer parks were an answer to the housing dilemma of the defense industry. Not much has changed since the early establishment of trailer parks as part of the housing reality in American society.

The early 1950s serves as the chronological marker when a shift in mobile home usage occurred, moving from a temporary residence to being used as permanent year-round living quarters (Miller, 1985; Wallis, 1997). When the defense industry trailer parks were no longer needed, many trailer parks stayed in existence. The term “newlywed or nearly dead” became the mantra used by those living on the outside to describe those who lived in trailer parks (Wallis, 1997). Along with this newer American housing reality, serving the purpose of lower cost of living for the elderly and newlyweds, came the reality of the stigma that began 20 years prior. The stigma associated with trailer park living still holds notions of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions whether the location is in rural, suburban, or urban areas.

Zoning stipulations attempt to place trailer park locations to the outskirts of rural, suburban, or urban communities. These locations compound the negative outsider image of trailer park residents (Block, 2006). Residents of trailer parks work to transform the *othering* they experience due the historical stigma and lack of single-family home ownership. The negative connotations assigned to trailer parks have not changed; residents still endure stigma of living in a *trailer* within a trailer park (Aman & Yamal, 2010; Kusenbach, 2009; MacTavish, 2007; McCarthy, 2010; Miller, 1985).

In an attempt to reconstruct the image of trailer parks and mobile home living, the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association became the Manufactured Housing Institute in 1975 (Wallis, 1997). The politically correct reference of the mobile home industry transformed from the earliest *trailer home*, to *mobile home*, to the current industry standard, *manufactured home*. The Housing Act of 1980 officially changed the terminology in all federal laws and literature from *mobile home* to *manufactured home* in reference to homes built after 1976. What might be curious to scholars, particularly those interested in identity formation, is that nearly four decades after this attempt to dignify the manufactured home industry, outsiders still feel uneasy about trailer parks. The stigma about manufactured home communities remains no matter the changes in legal classification.

The peculiar nature of being both a home owner and yet a renter of the lot that your home sits upon creates a kind of unsettled status for residents of manufactured home communities. In one sense, trailer park residents failed at obtaining the American symbol of success, the sacred single-family home. In another sense, they have not failed in this quest; rather their success can be measured by not having to rent, but by owning their own home. But, they do pay lot rent. These realizations, along with having to follow park rules and regulations to avoid violations that end in added fees, may work to continually erode the feeling of pride that comes with home ownership. Unlike single-family homeowners, residents of mobile home parks live under the ambiguity of park managers and other staff who are paid to enforce rules, many times operating like a small scale police department (Hart, Rhodes, & Morgan, 2002; McCarthy, 2010).

Still, many residents purposely select trailer park living because a mobile home generally is less costly than single-family home ownership and offers pride that is associated with home ownership (Beamish, Goss, Atilas & Kim, 2001; Berube, 1997; Hart, Rhodes & Morgan, 2002;

Newman & Fleming, 2011). Young families typically view trailer park living as less desirable, especially if they wanted a single-family home (Saatcioglu & Ozanne, 2013).

Commodification of trailer park residents.

The bottom line is Americans as a group are getting poorer, and while that's bad news for those living on the economic fringes, it also means opportunities for those willing to take advantage of the trend.

Frank Rolfe, Founder of Mobile Home University

The hope of using the purchase of a manufactured home to eventually lead to single-family home ownership is compromised when owners discover the legal classification of manufactured homes as personal property. Like cars, they are built on top of a chassis and have axles and wheels used for the initial transport and set-up, and possible movement to another location (Krumboltz, 2014; Neate, 20015). The financing involved in the purchase of a manufactured home generally is higher than that of a single-family home purchase, and is often disclosed when the purchase agreement is signed (Genz, 2001; Newman & Fleming, 2011). This practice exploits the pressed economic situation of families with a desire to create more permanence in their lives by moving from being tenants to becoming homeowners. Depreciation of manufactured homes perpetuates the cycle of manufactured home living throughout the lifetimes of many families. Frequently, first time residents of trailer parks wishing to sell their home are not aware that it is worth much less than they first paid for it until they attempt to sell their home (Rivlin, 2014; Semuels, 2014).

Twenty million Americans currently live in manufactured homes (U.S. Census, 2012), with 8.6 million people living in trailer parks. In addition to these statistics, manufactured homes were 9% of the total new housing market in the 2014 U.S. Census. The reported costs of moving a manufactured home within 50 miles of its current location ranges from \$2,000 to \$10,000, depending on the state and the company hired to do the moving (Krumboltz, 2014). Owners of

trailer parks are aware of this reality and use it to their advantage to raise the lot rent frequently, knowing their residents are economically powerless to leave (Rivlin, 2014; Semuels, 2014). Raises in lot rent are difficult to absorb and are often done so by cutting corners in areas like food and clothing. In this way, parents can keep their children's educational trajectory stable.

Purchasing trailer parks is promoted by organizations like Mobile Home University. The founder and sole teacher at Mobile Home University, Frank Rolfe, is a partner in owning 100 trailer parks located all over the United States (Rivlin, 2014; Semuels, 2014). Rolfe hosts numerous weekend "universities" in key American cities where there is a proliferation of mobile home parks. Students of Rolfe's university pay \$2,000 per weekend to ride in a tour bus traveling to various local trailer parks. While on the tour bus, students are given lectures by Rolfe about how easy it is to exploit low income families, the elderly, and disabled people who view trailer park living as their only viable option. The weekend is spent learning about the economic situations of trailer park residents and how easy it is to exploit them as their next step out of the trailer park may be homelessness.

Before walking through the trailer parks and meeting the park manager and some residents, Rolfe warns his students to avoid making any derogatory comments towards the residents like "trailer trash." He warned that the use of the term "trailer" should be avoided at all costs. Rolfe tells his students that if the trailer is paid off, it is still cheaper to charge upwards of \$600 per month for lot rent as it is the cheapest option for living, next to being homeless (Rivlin, 2014; Semuels, 2014). Using this rationale, owners of trailer parks can justify their tactics of raising lot rent that keeps some of their residents in a state of economic paranoia.

Identity Formation

In the modern era, when education is compulsory and the promise of equity through education is universal, exclusion is powerfully a form of inclusion. Not being there as a form of being there; absence is presence.

Cope and Kalantzis (2000, p. 123)

Curriculum researchers have examined reproduction and resistance theory in isolation, with identity formation in schools incorporated into both topics. The research of the 1970s recognized the reproductive capacities of schools, with the over-determined nature of reproduction theory studied by offering schools as sites of resistance in the 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). In public schools, identity formation, social reproduction, and resistance work together and influence one another. To aid in the organization of this literature review, identity formation, social reproduction, and resistance are examined separately.

In looking at identity formation, four aspects of schooling influence the identity formation of marginalized youth in a direction that conflicts with the idea of equal opportunity within school walls. The four aspects are (a) exclusion, (b) curriculum alienation, (c) labeling, and (d) assimilation.

Exclusion

Cope and Kalantzis (2000) highlighted four types of education in the modern world: (a) exclusion; (b) assimilation; (c) pluralism, and (d) multiculturalism. Of these four, exclusion and assimilation are modern types of education examined in this literature review. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) referred to *life worlds* in ways that resemble Bourdieu's *habitus* (1990). Life worlds are what we come to know by the culture, social class, and family into which children were born. In any examination of exclusion, it is first necessary to deliberate on what is meant by the *culture of power*.

Members of the culture of power have access to many advantages; including accesses to codes needed to understand and fully participate in the *discourse of power*. Moreover, individuals who understand the codes of power do not suffer from being silenced. Delpit (1988, 1995) contended that in institutional settings, like school, being silenced is interpreted as being heard, but not listened by others. When dialogue is silenced, it can be a direct affront on life worlds, a dismissal of those being silenced. If individuals are members in the culture of power, they may be unaware of any silencing (Delpit, 1988, 1995; Fine, 2003). In schools, membership in the culture of power is linked to membership in the middle- and upper-middle class whose life worlds are acknowledged daily. According to Delpit (1988, 1995), participants affirming the ideologies that silence others can deny this power. Furthermore, Delpit (1988, 1995) argued that members of the culture of power, deny being participants in silencing the dialogue of others.

Being silenced, or “heard, but not listened to,” is consistent with the modern form of education by exclusion (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Delpit, 1988, 1995). Exclusion is defined as not being a member of a group. Exclusion from one group means inclusion in another (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). They asserted that:

The transition from life world to education is fundamentally a process of varying degrees of inclusion – whether you are on the train in the first place and how you’re positioned if you are on it. The relation of education to life world is in the nature of a subtle and more or less difficult dialogue between the culture of the institution and the subjectively lived experience. From life world to life world, student t to student, the dialogue differs, the form of inclusion differs and the outcomes differ. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 123)

Delpit (1995) spoke about positioning that binds with the formation of identity based upon whether individuals are situated within the culture of power. Five aspects of power were examined in the context of the institutional behaviors seen in schools:

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.

2. There are codes or rules for participating in power, that is, there is a “culture of power.”
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.
4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
5. Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (p. 25)

According to Delpit (1988, 1995), this definition of the culture of power was similar to the findings of others, including Jackson (1968) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000). Predating Delpit, Jackson’s (1968) work highlighted the creation of submissive identities in school by calling attention to the amount of time students spend being subservient in the daily routine of school. Jackson (1968) viewed school through the lens of *crowds, praise and power*. Students within the culture of power may demonstrate assimilating to institutional behaviors expected in school more readily than those who are locked out of membership by virtue of their life worlds. Research by Jackson (1968) and Cope & Kalantzis (2000) contributed to opening the dialogue about the interface of exclusion and power on the formation of identities. Delpit (1988, 1995) disseminated the influence that membership in the culture of power has in terms of race.

In teaching the Brazilian working class adults how to read the world through use of critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) compared identity formation of the oppressed with the actions of the culture of power in schools. Freire’s literacy work with the oppressed population of Brazil began by raising consciousness about circumstance associated with exclusionary practices in schools. Freire moved people to consider their current situation in ways to which they had not been exposed until his work. By encouraging students to reach for a critical and revolutionary level of *conscientizacao* (Freire, 1970, p. 55), he differed from Delpit (1988, 1995). Freire (1970) stressed

changing the system of power so that students could avoid both exclusion and assimilation into the culture of power and “become beings for themselves” (p. 55).

Curriculum Alienation

Apple (1982, 2004) argued that the power differential and positioning of students as marginalized is enacted in schools daily. Like both Freire (1970) and Delpit (1988, 1995), Apple (1999, 2004, 2006) helped in understanding the complexities of the larger institutional and political powers controlling schools by pressing against the dominant neoliberal ideology in schools. The intensification of teachers’ work requires so much physical and psychological energy that an atmosphere of powerlessness is pervasive throughout the teaching culture (Apple, 2009). The possibility of the structure of public schools offering anything other than an equal opportunity for all is contrary to the dominant ideology enacted in schools.

Equally as important is the school’s claim to neutrality amidst a state sponsored ideology, that researchers (Apple, 2004, 2006; Freire, 1970; Hooks, 1994) found that both teachers and students play a role in ways that mask unequal access to curriculum. According to Apple (2004):

The latent effects of both absolutizing the individual and defining our role as neutral technicians in the service of amelioration, therefore, makes it nearly impossible for educators and others to develop a potent analysis of widespread social and economic injustice. It makes their curricular and teaching practices relatively impotent in exploring the nature of the social order of which they are a part. (p. 9)

Analysis of this quote suggested that the root of identity formation of youth in schools rests in the belief that schools enact a neutral curriculum. Apple (2004) argued against this claim of neutrality, and that the goodness of the *intent* of neutrality impedes the examination of the inequities perpetuated by a system that favors those with the right social and cultural capital. According to Apple (2004), the official labeling in which schools partake is unopposed due to the benevolent guise under which such a labeling system is perpetuated.

Historically speaking, the closest we get to the root of Apple's (2004) argument is in studying the influence of curriculum alienation on identity formation from the work of Counts (1932). Much like the cumulative work of Apple, Counts (1932) work foreshadowed what was to come. In his address to the American Federation of Teachers, Counts (1932) exposed the danger of school curriculum that ignores the needs of working class youth. When applied to contemporary times, not much has changed. School curriculum then and school curriculum now favors those with middle- and upper-middle class standing by the exchange of information that values the life worlds of students from economic privilege. Counts (1932) claimed that the progressive movement was a veiled agenda to promote the social conservative movement of his day is similar to Apple's (2004) notion of neutrality in school curriculum being connected to neoliberal ideology.

Gee (2000) addressed the influence of identity formation in portrayal of two different types of students that public schools are creating. Gee (2000) portrayed the identity of one group (relegated to lower rungs of the old capitalism) as formed in relationship to the accomplishments of the other group, the *portfolio people*.

The first, *portfolio people*, are students who arrive at school with a sizeable reserve of experience, knowledge, and skills to navigate the world. Portfolio people are focused on their individual success and their movement from school to home is seamless in building experiences through projects that have a singular goal of maintaining or exceeding their economic status. Portfolio people are adept at making and remaking themselves to exceed their current level of accomplishments. In other words, portfolio people are fully equipped to enter the world. The curriculum in place in suburban public schools supports the development of portfolio people.

The other type of person Gee (2000) believes public schools prepare are those who are expected to be "relegated to the lower rungs of the old industrial capitalism. Their schools and

communities are ill equipped to produce them as portfolio people. We make them feel like failures” (p. 62). The experiences, knowledge, and skills of this *other* person are not a match to the public school system that promotes a curriculum more suited to portfolio people. The personal and collective histories of these other students are ignored. “Bridges to the life worlds” of these marginalized students are not built in the course of the school day (Gee, 2000, p. 62).

Students with life worlds closer to the culture of power possess the right type of capital to become portfolio people (Gee, 2000). Students who experience interruptions in life worlds when moving between home and school may be exposed to exclusionary practices that challenge the neutrality claim. Challenging the belief that all students have an equal opportunity in school is counter-intuitive to the teaching profession. Apple (2004) assisted teachers in arguing against commonsense beliefs if they become aware of the non-neutral curriculum. Ayers (2010) called for awareness that highlights the urgency of *conscientizacao* in the 21st century: “Our vocation is to try to shake ourselves and others free of the anesthetizing effects of the modern predicament, and that includes the seduction of common sense” (p. 139). People have been led to believe in the myth of equal opportunity in schools promoted through the neutrality claim.

Labeling

Apple (2004) claimed that when labels are given to students, an essentializing of students is created. Labels, such as being a trailer park kid, was not put in a student’s official CA60 school record. No concise phrase exists that portrays the labeling of students who live outside the boundaries of a non-neutral curriculum.

Brantlinger (2008) explained how members of the middle class are unaware of the harsh effects of their perceptions of the working class. History presents stories of dreams coming true in America, believing that public schools offer equal chances for everyone to improve their lives.

Instead of “honest stories about where working class students have entered the game” (Counts, 1932, p. 14), some members of the middle- and upper-middle classes point to a lack of motivation or work ethic, or assign individual pathology, to rationalize why social class transcendence has not occurred for some people. Disruption of common perceptions might promote a shift from a focus on a lack of motivation or individual pathology to understanding the way schools are structured to advantage middle class students (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Brantlinger. 2008; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011). Wexler (as cited in Brantlinger, 2008) noted that by the secondary school years, most working class students were disengaged from school, aware of the denigrating perceptions of those who have “bought into the meritocracy game” (p. 246).

Willis (1981) examined factors that could affect identity formation of working class youth in schools. Willis’ ethnographic account of the lives of the ‘lads’ in a working class town in England analyzed their resistance behaviors and prospects for social reproduction. Willis (1981) found that the ‘lads’ were prone to establish their identity as resisters in the formal system of school as a primary extension of their life worlds. The ‘lads’ celebrated, promoted, and embraced their labels as being the rebellious group working to upset the flow of the school day. No separation existed between their outside lives and school lives; rather, their outside lives were enacted in school.

In contrast, to avoid harmful labels and gain entrée into the culture of power in America, working class students have to be adept at ignoring experiences and knowledge they bring to school. Abandoning working class life worlds is necessary to escape an identity nested in a deficit perspective and to gain membership in the culture of power. Willis (1981) found the locus of the identity of the ‘lads’ was in their ability to subvert the formal culture of power. By uprooting the system, their counter-culture yielded its own culture of power. This counterculture was in continual

conflict with the formal culture of power. The 'lads' generated enough power with their identity that the formal culture of power in the school was held hostage. The 'lads' became the culture of power in their school. When paralleled with exclusion as a modern form of schooling (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), the 'lads' purposely excluded themselves by electing to refuse immersion in the formal structure of the school. They rejected becoming part of rule following, 'er ole' culture. They successfully countered the identities of the 'er oles' and rejected efforts by school personnel to remake their identities in acknowledgement of the school norms.

Assimilation

Assimilation includes acquisition of the advantages of more privileged peers who activate their advantages without acknowledging their existence (Ogbu, 2003; Reay, 2009; Weis, 2008). Many families are willing to experience financial and social stressors to fulfill aspirations of upward mobility for their children. Working class parents who hope for assimilation of their children into the mainstream of prestigious suburban schools may be unaware of the family and community tensions associated with assimilation. Reported in terms of race and ethnicity, assimilation brings pressure on students who are required to be adept at living in two worlds simultaneously (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 2003; Suskind, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). Minority students who successfully assimilate do so at the cost of loosening their family bonds. When academic prowess is obtained, acquisition of different types of cultural and social capital follows. New channels of possibility are opened that require leaving a familiar life world behind and creating a new life.

The analysis of the workings of class from the *inside-out* and the *outside-in* involves psychological defenses in which both parents and their children are engaged (Luttrell, 2008, p. 72). Although assimilation may be the goal of working class parents who make sacrifices to send

their children to exemplary schools, these life transitions are never easy. The parents of assimilated students may be concerned when their children experience difficulty with being in a world that was formerly unchallenged and taken for granted (Luttrell, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999).

Foucault (2012) found that identity consciousness of both self and others is forged through fluctuations in how power is executed. Foucault (2012) defined *classification*, or in the case of assimilation, *(re)classification*, as a matter of applying new labels to individuals and groups. Consider a working class student who assimilates to the middle class structure of school. This student might become a pseudo middle class student in the eyes of middle class peers (Foucault, 2012). Assimilation indicates a modified label with coded qualifiers (a good student who is working class) and a reconstruction of the behaviors of the assimilated student. For first and second generation Mexican immigrant high-school students, assimilation created a crack in the solidarity of their social group and conveyed a classification of abandonment (Valenzuela, 1999). Therefore, acceptance is an important ingredient for the identity formation of adolescents, although assimilation into more desirable peer groups might indicate the abandonment of the original peer group. Carter (2006) referred to this type of assimilation as cultural straddlers, with few young people able to cross borders and move fluently between such different life worlds. While assimilation is a worthy goal, the literature indicates that challenges faced by assimilated youth may situate them as being *othered* in an entirely different way.

Resistance

Learning how to not-learn is an intellectual and social challenge; sometimes you have to work very hard at it. It consists of an active, often ingenious, willful rejection of even the most compassionate and well-designed teaching.

Herb Kohl, (1994, p. 2)

Researchers (Gee, 2000; McLaren, 2015; Weis, 2008) advised that any portrayal of group culture risks ignoring, and thereby marginalizing, individual identities within the group. Both teachers and students are in subordinate positions to the school as a state apparatus, and to the ideal that schools operate as democratic institutions. By examining the structure of school in relation to acts of resistance, the hybrid nature of resistance acts demonstrated in our schools can be better understood. The intensification of teachers' work places structural limits on what can be accomplished in one school day (Apple, 2009). This constraint on time increases the pressure that connects teacher evaluation outcomes to the academic performance of their students. Any flexible time to which teachers had become accustomed has been decreased, so that increased demands of standardization could be met. In Michigan, 40% of a teacher's evaluation was based on a student growth model that might impact teacher frustration levels with non-achievers. Fractured relationships between teachers and students may be one cause of student resistance.

Willis (1981, 2010) found that the working class lads resisted by "thwarting time." By doing nothing in school, the 'lads' were successful at using time as an act of opposition to authority. By knowing how valuable time is to the work of teachers, they were successful at creating an antagonistic relationship with their teachers for which the argument over time was significant. Likewise, Kohl (2003) argued that resistance among students involves engineering and engaging in ways of *not learning*, and that takes a lot of time and effort. If the trade-off of purposely not learning is to maintain identity, then some students may view it as worth the effort. Similarly, Fordham (1996) found increased agency in the African American community, when others viewed the wasting of time by African American students as resistance (p. 39). Willis (1981, 2010) contended that among the 'lads,' time was collected and held as part of their identity as resisters.

Fordham (1996) asserted that achieving the American dream through years of schooling is an abstract concept for urban African American youth; yet for White middle-class students the American dream appears concretely in their worlds. This double standard created doubts about the value of school for urban African American students (Fordham, 1996). Furthermore, when writing about the silencing in a New York City public high school, Fine (2003) found that the students did not believe in a connection between education and income. According to Fine (2003), silencing of life worlds in school promotes contradictions and “advances adolescents cynicism about schooling and credentials” (p. 18).

Contradictions were noted in that while students reported that a diploma was needed in life, they also indicated they knew community members who were rich and had not finished school. For some youth wrestling with the notion of the importance of school success, compliance by exhibiting expected student behaviors might end up being too much of a personal surrender of identity. Conflicting views that school is not necessary for success and demands of the teaching profession could result in tension between students and teachers. The primary responsibility of teachers is academic achievement of all students and has not changed over time. However, the pressure to ensure that learning happens is greater than ever before. Both teachers and their students are frustrated by student resistance to schoolwork, placing them at odds with one another. The intensification of teaching prioritizes the goal of moving forward with learning as teachers’ primary concern (Fine, 2003).

The perceptions of teachers may be influenced by the middle class norms that structure schools. Student resistance could be perceived as a reaction to what Valenzuela (1999) identified as “subtractive schooling.” While an alienating curriculum often ignores the life worlds of students, subtractive schooling deidentifies the students and results in an abandonment of self to

learn the curriculum. Successful assimilation means subtracting the cultural and social capital with which students enter school. This “cultural eradication” is a concern in schools where resistance is viewed as an obstacle (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 4).

Social Reproduction

McLaren (2015) in asking, “How do schools help transmit the status and class positions of the wider society?” (p. 151), framed his discussion of the influence of schools in social reproduction. Five recurring myths that emerged through an examination of the literature were explored. The five myths were associated with social reproduction by virtue of decisions made for students and teachers. Attention to voice, power, and privilege is given in the context of examining family patterns and parenting styles that might influence social reproduction.

Myth # 1: You get what you deserve.

Regardless of the reality of vast school inequalities, hegemonic ideologies circulate the message that equal opportunity exists in education and that subordinates are at fault for their lesser outcomes.

Brantlinger (2008, p. 243)

This myth is informed by belief in meritocracy. Believing in meritocracy is part of the historical fabric of America. Those who work hard and play by the rules are expected to get ahead. Upsetting social reproduction for students from pressed economic means is viewed as being all in the hands of the student and how hard they are willing to work. Gorski (2013) asserted that many low-income people work hard all day long and still cannot seem to get ahead.

Valenzuela (1999) found three factors that impacted the degree to which first and second generation Mexican immigrant students were academically competent and able to assimilate by successfully straddling of cultural boundaries. The three factors, (a) authentic caring in the classroom, (b) possessing the right amount and type of social capital, and (c) being able to ward

off the subtractive curriculum were noted as having substantial influenced if students were able to better their chances of upsetting social reproduction. A slim probability existed that students would possess or experience one or more of three of the factors identified by Valenzuela (1999). Valenzuela (1999) surmised that the cultural framework within which students attend school contributed to the individual difficulties they were asked to overcome.

When schools promote a meritocratic ideology, they decrease hope in ideals like the Threshold Authorization Principle (Gutmann, 1987). The Threshold Authorization Principle (Guttmann, 1987) is the ideal that to “compete among good lives,” all students have the right to learn up to a certain threshold. Anything beyond that threshold is driven by ideologies that promote meritocracy. Researchers (Carter, 2006; Guttmann, 1987; Oakes, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999) argued that academic tracking can impede the possibilities of students who do not meet the demographic criteria of White, suburban, and minimally middle class in status. Howe (1997) contended that students and their families who were not included in “democratic deliberations” could be at risk of being locked out of reaching success beyond Guttmann’s Threshold Authorization Principle.

Myth # 2: Low-income people are damaged.

Middle class life worlds are favored over working class life worlds by teachers who can relate to their middle class students through their own middle class orientation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011). Frequently, urban poor students are taught that the only way out of their “deplorable” lives is to do well in school (Fine & Weis, 1997; Fordham 1996). Another way that this message is taught in schools and received by low-income students is to persuade students who live with economic stressors to believe that any level of rejection of school is equivalent to throwing away their futures.

Ogbu (2003) argued a discrepancy between what the parents of White middle class students say publicly and conditions that they really want in the schools their children attend. At Shaker Heights, an integrated middle class high school, Ogbu (2003) found a culture of silence that perpetuated the image of racial harmony at the school. Publicly, the White middle class parents expressed pride in the fact that their children attended an integrated high school. However, they avoided dealing with racial problems in Shaker Heights. In the cafeteria and hallways, and by the classes into which they were tracked, African American students were segregated.

Fordham (1996) found African American students from Capital High in Washington, DC, experienced perceptions that impacted integration and influenced upsetting social reproduction. Fordham (1996) explained perceptions of African Americans as invisible students among White Washingtonians. Fordham explained that the existence of low-income African Americans is largely dismissed as non-existent by White middle class parents. When confronted with the reality of low income African American students at Capital High who were experiencing difficulty relating to the non-neutral curriculum, White middle class parents often remarked that the African American students who were having difficulties were individually responsible for their inadequacies (Fordham, 1996). The Whites at Capital High perceived the fictive kinship system among African American students as a gang mentality. The African American students who successfully integrated into the mainstream of the school were accused of *passing* (acting White).

Myth # 3: People are comfortable talking about social class.

Attempts at being able to talk about social class in schools might be influenced by mandates on allowable discussion topics and that most Americans identify as middle class (Felski, 2002; Fine, 1987). When discussing social class, people who identify as middle class may mirror the

hesitancy demonstrated by White parents and teachers when talking about issues of race at Capital High (Fordham, 1996).

Silencing the discourse about social class in schools decreases the likelihood of interrupting social reproduction. An ethnographic study by Fine (1987) in a Manhattan high school attended by Latino and African American students from Harlem found that silencing of student voice was prevalent. When life world conversations entered classrooms, school policy mandated that teachers subvert any conversations in class that were not academically based (Fine, 1987). When students brought their lives into school and discussed matters of social class, race, or ethnicity, they were silenced. The official school policy instructed teachers to *define*, and not *describe*, any reflections students may have had about topics outside of the official curriculum. Student voices that centered on curiosities about the larger world and their place in it were silenced. Fine (1987) found that most teachers felt they had to follow school policy.

Davidson (1997) contended that talking about social class could make people feel uncomfortable in a way that was different from talking about acculturation. For example, Davidson noted that it was unkind to talk about the way someone was dressed, but common to talk about challenges to cultural maintenance. The hesitancy with talking about social class might be grounded as uncertainty in how to frame the discussion. McLaren (2015) asserted that talk of social class in schools of education is framed within the perspective of the unequal resources allotted to schools. Awkwardness with discourse about social class differences is compounded because we know that memberships in specific social classes exist, yet it is considered rude to talk about social class status as if something is wrong with people of low-income; and contrarily, something is right with people of high-income.

According to the literature, White people have difficulty talking about issues of race that surface in the schools. At Capital High, Fordham (1996) found that White teachers were uncomfortable using the words, “Black” or “African American.” White teachers stammer, search for other words, speak hesitantly, and stutter when talking about race at Capital High.

Myth # 4: Lower-income people do not care about school.

Researchers (Fordham, 1996; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Ogbu, 2003; Timm & Borman, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1981) have presented findings on a variety of environments: (a) Appalachian school communities, (b) racially and ethnically integrated school communities, and (c) case studies of families of differing social class standing. Their studies indicated that determinations by teachers, students, and parents about who does and who does not care about school often lack analysis beyond the moment of discontent. Likewise, discontent among students, teachers, and parents persist in ways that ignore the historical experience of communities and individuals and lack a discourse of how to approach the intersection of life worlds with school expectations.

Timm and Borman (1997) noted that social structures, such as families, peers, and neighborhoods are deep-seated in Appalachian communities. Furthermore, Timm and Borman (1997) argued that erasing the history of Appalachian communities in school created a barrier that added to the cultural dissonance between teachers and students. The expanse between the non-neutral school curriculum and the life worlds of Appalachian students was wide enough that the ending point presented teacher attitudes that conveyed Appalachian families as not caring about school. When whole communities are perceived in false terms, as Timm and Borman (1997) found the Appalachian communities to be, the incidence of social reproduction in this community continues.

Students know that being engaged and doing well in school are actions valued by parents and teachers. However, teachers believed that low income students need to be motivated to be successful in school. By increasing their motivation, they can become independent and understand the need to work hard (Fordham, 1996; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Ogbu, 2003; Timm & Borman, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1981). Some lower-income families encounter obstacles in checking their children's homework because of employment schedules and their own low level of formal schooling (Fordham, 1996; Lareau, 2000, 2011; Ogbu, 2003; Timm & Borman, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1981). Lower-income parents place pressure on their children to obtain a high school diploma and go to college (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 2003; Valenzuela; 1999). Evidence that parents want their children to attain higher levels of education than they did directly contradicts the claim that people from depressed economic circumstance do not care about school. Lareau (2000) argued that people at all social class levels have similar desires for their children to do well in school. Moreover, Ogbu (2003) found that the African American students were socialized with an emphasis placed on attending college, but were not provided the tactical planning or knowledge needed to get to college.

Myth #5: Knowledge distribution and pedagogy are neutral.

Anyon (1980, 1981) found themes that contribute to dismantling the myth that knowledge distribution and pedagogy are neutral. The themes that emerged varied relative to the social class standing of each of the elementary schools included in Anyon's study. Anyon (1980, 1981) discovered that school tasks and relationships with teachers mirrored work relations and procedures of the occupations of parents. For example, in the working class school, the schoolwork was *mechanistic* and offered no connection to a larger purpose or reasoning in which students could believe. The teacher's emphasis on learning was to keep things simple, with a focus on the

basics. The working class students' interpreted knowledge as being located outside of themselves, and that it is something that you get by "knowing stuff" (Anyon, 1981, p. 10). In the working class school, knowledge is commoditized and considered unrelated to anything outside of what is done inside of school. Anyon (1981) described a theme of resistance that permeated the working class school. Anyon (1981) claimed neglecting working class students' history of working class struggles added to the propensity for social reproduction. Anyon (1981) demonstrated that social reproduction is fostered in school through means of both knowledge distribution and pedagogy that corresponded with the working world of students' parents.

In case studies of students, their teachers, and their parents, Lareau (2000, 2011) concluded that differences in child-rearing patterns between working class and middle class families influenced the academic success of students. Lareau (2011) cautioned that the structure of school works to the advantage of some groups and not others. Researchers (Anyon, 1981; Fordham, 1996; Lareau, 2011; McLaren, 2015; Ogbu, 2003) maintained that the hidden inequities in the school structure do not exist for all students all the time, but they are present and work against possibility. A second caution prominent in the literature is that speaking categorically is not intended to erase the complexities of life worlds, or ignore the social reproductive influence of families, peers, and communities (Gee, 2000; McLaren, 2015). Social institutions, like schools, are not alone when sifting through the influences of social reproduction among our youth.

Lareau (2011) outlined patterns in child rearing that differed among working class and middle and upper-middle class families, resulting in diverse connectedness to school. According to Lareau (2011), middle and upper-middle class parents generally offered a *concerted cultivation* to their children, resulting in their children developing a "sense of entitlement" (p. 2). Concerted cultivation involves middle and upper-middle class students knowing how to navigate social

institutions to have their needs met. They know they have a right to their opinions, feel comfortable offering advice to adults, and expect to be taken seriously (Lareau, 2011, p. 285).

In contrast, Lareau (2011) asserted that working class parents take an *accomplishment of natural growth* approach to child rearing. Types of cultural capital embedded in the accomplishment of natural growth include a respect for adults and a boundary between adults and children. Lareau (2011) found that working class students spend less time talking with their parents and parents did not have to explain their decisions to their children. The leisure time of working class students differed from the middle- and upper-middle class students. For example, Lareau (2011) found that working class students have unregulated play in which they have the freedom to make or break their own rules regarding such play. Conversely, middle- and upper-middle class children have leisure activities that are scheduled, regulated, and strategic in the way that they add to their social and cultural capital. Differences in child rearing patterns had implications for school success in the way that tension increases when working class children bring social and cultural capital to school that is not valued. Findings by Lareau (2011) indicated that profound differences in the types of cultural capital that are transferred to children can affect social reproduction in school.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods that were used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions are presented in this chapter. The discussion includes a restatement of the problem, the research design, research site for the study, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Each of these topics is presented separately.

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of middle school working class youth, residing in a local trailer park, who attend a middle- and upper-middle class, majority White middle school located in an outlying suburban area of metropolitan Detroit. For the purpose of this study, the working class youth are referred to as trailer park kids.

The questions that bind this ethnographic research to various narratives of life in suburban middle- and upper middle-class schools are:

1. What are the differences in the perspectives of middle school students who experience social segregation because of occupying an inferior social class standing to their peers? Additionally, in what ways might the interpretation of social segregation influence adolescents' identity formation situated by the possession of a diminished social class standing?
2. To what extent does the positioning of working-class students by teachers as unable to participate in school at levels equal to their more economically advantaged peers affect the prospect of social reproduction?
3. How do themes of resistance, exhibited by all participant groups, assist in the articulation of misunderstood perceptions and class analysis?

Research Design

This study used a qualitative ethnographic research design to explore the narratives of trailer park kids' experiences of attending a middle- and upper-middle class, majority White middle school. Van Maanen (2011) defined ethnography as being experientially driven and located between two worlds; the world of the researcher and the world of the informants. Taking this into account makes the use of ethnographic methods the appropriate choice for this dissertation. Connected to the research design is the critical theoretical perspective that informs this research. Generating the arrangement of critical ethnographic methods are LeCompte and Schensul (1999c):

- the selection of the research site and the culture of the informants
- the questions posed in interviews
- the domains recognized as emerging from the data
- the interpretation of the data
- with whom the study results are shared and the resulting policy changes (if any).

Crotty (1998) contended that critically orientated research interrogates current ideology and questions commonly held presumptions with an ending focus on social justice and social action. Desire to hear the life stories of my participants and present their voices in narrative form could assist in initiating conversations about developing more just conditions in schools among those who work in schools.

Layered under the critical paradigm is the interpretive paradigm. My critical orientation to research sought to *transform* the perspectives of individuals and change school policy, my interpretive orientation seeks to *understand* the behaviors of participants by analysis of social interactions and communications (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). Involvement in my research through interacting with informants daily establishes the need for understanding and interpreting

the multiple life worlds of participants. I enter the interpretive framework with the knowledge that it might be difficult to examine my own bias. My position as the interpreter of all data presents opportunity to examine the bias of my colleagues. To honor the life world stories of my participants, I intend to keep a research journal included in this dissertation. In this way, I am able to select what to use to confirm emerging themes in the data analysis process (LeCompte & Shchensul, 1999a, Reismann, 1993).

Research Site

The study was conducted at Kearney Middle School that opened in the fall of 1991 to meet the intense population growth of Larimer Heights that began in the 1980s that lasted nearly through the first decade of the 21st century. While Larimer Heights is generally an affluent community, Waldenburg Acres is a trailer park with 755 trailers that provide housing for working class families. Most of the residents of Larimer Heights work in professional occupations (engineers, teachers, lawyers, physicians, etc.).

Larimer Heights School District is large, with three high schools, four middle schools, 13 elementary schools, and 1 alternative school. At the time of the study, the total student population was 15,000, with 950 teachers providing instruction. Approximately 1,200 students in sixth through eighth grades are enrolled at Kearney Middle School. Seventy-nine students residing in Waldenburg Acres attend middle school at Kearney, representing 7% of the student population. The remaining students live in single family middle- and upper-middle class homes. Fifty-eight teachers comprise the faculty at Kearney. In addition, five full time ancillary staff (psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, learning consultant, and teacher consultant), three counselors, five full-time paraprofessionals, three part-time paraprofessionals, three full-time secretaries, one part-time secretary, two assistant principals, and one principal also are assigned to the building.

The school is well staffed and nearly all classrooms are at full capacity with 36 students. Most of the professionals at Kearney have completed a graduate degree, with 92% of the teachers earning a master's degree, and another 15% of that number earning specialist degrees.

Selection of Research Participants

The more common use of terms for research that engages in ethnographic methods is to refer to participants as informants (McCurdy, Spradley & Shandy, 2005). I use the term participant because I work at my research site. I have collegial relationships with each teacher participant and five of the students selected to participate were students assigned to one hour of supervised study, which is the class that I supervise. The method used to select student research participants and their parents was purposeful sampling. By using purposeful sampling, my research represented the proportional heterogeneity of the Kearney Middle School (Maxwell, 2005; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). Eight students were selected to participate in the study: two from the sixth grade, two from the seventh grade, and four from the eighth grade. I doubled the number of the eighth grade participants in the hopes that they might assist in interpreting experiences of younger participants. All students enrolled in special education courses were excluded from the sample to capture the experience of students from Waldenburg Acres attending school without official labels. Four females and four males were selected. Student participants included one African American male, one female and one male with fathers who were first generation Mexican immigrants, and five Caucasian participants. These numbers were aligned to the demographic distribution of the 56 Waldenburg Acres students who met the inclusion criteria for this study. Eleven percent of the Waldenburg Acres students are African American, 18% are first generation Mexican immigrants, and 70% of the students are Caucasian. Fifty percent of the 56 general education students from Waldenburg Acres were enrolled in at least one general education intervention course at Kearney

during this research design. The general education intervention courses offered at Kearney are mathematics laboratory, strategic reading, and supervised study. I am the teacher of record for supervised study for three of the six periods in the school day.

At least one parent of the students selected for the study was interviewed. Five of the eight parents were interviewed at home and the remaining three were interviewed at local restaurants, trailer park clubhouse, and school. No inclusion or exclusion criteria was established for the parents, except that one of their children had to be included in the study.

The teacher participant selection was determined using purposeful sampling. I selected four teachers to participate in interviews and participant observations. Two female teachers and two male teachers were selected. Each core curricular area was represented in my selection of teacher informants, except for social studies. The length of time teachers had taught at Kearney was the first criterion, which eliminated the selection of social studies teachers. All teachers in the sample had been teaching at Kearney for more than 24 years. Selecting teachers with long-term experience at Kearney increased the likelihood of understanding the intensification of the teaching profession mentioned in my literature review (Apple, 2009). Teacher participants had to be able to speak to the historical perspective of the school and add to understandings of how the students from Waldenburg Acres changed over the years (Valenzuela, 1999). All participants were teaching at Kearney when it was structured as a middle school and teachers worked in teams of four, having two hours of teacher preparation per day. One hour was spent planning their curriculum and the other hour was used to collaborate and strategize about meeting the needs of students. This aspect of my selection supported purposeful sampling in that Maxwell (2005) contended that a purposeful sampling is the willful selection of participants who could adequately represent and speak to the theory I developed throughout this study. The teachers were all parents and only one lived outside

the limits of Larimer Heights Schools. I believe the aspect of parenting and the array of differing school attendance selections, inside and outside of Larimer Heights could add another layer to this research that might not have been available if the teachers selected were not parents. All grade levels are represented in my sample of teachers, including one sixth grade teacher, one seventh grade teacher and two eighth grade teachers. All four have taught at all three grade levels at various times throughout their tenure at Kearney. Maxwell (2005) contended that the practicability of data collection is a key aspect of using purposeful sampling. My work day at Kearney is somewhat flexible, adding to the feasibility of being able to collect data and use participant observation (Maxwell, 2005).

Permission

Formal permission to conduct the study was provided by the superintendent of the Larimer Heights School District. As for the teacher, student and parent participants, formal permission was acquired through informed consent for teachers and parents and student assent for the students. Copies of these documents are included in Appendix A. The informed consent forms were mailed to each participant family, with the teacher informed consent forms placed in their school mailboxes. I followed up with a phone call to answer any questions the participants may have.

Data Collection

Part of my responsibilities as the Learning Consultant is to evaluate students who may be eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan. Any mitigating circumstance that impedes a student from equal access to curriculum and instruction makes them eligible for a 504 evaluation. As part of the data collection process to determine eligibility, I sometimes spoke with psychologists, therapists, or physicians who might be working with the student being evaluated for a 504 Accommodation Plan. Research methods were selected to better understand such perceptions. Determining effects

of outside perceptions on the identity formation of Waldenburg Acres participants informed my research study. The findings of this research could help determine self-perceptions that Waldenburg Acres participants have of themselves and how they think they are perceived by other students and faculty.

Field observations as a primary source for my data collection. Table 1 provides the location and frequency of my field observation design.

Table 1: *Location and Frequency of Field Observations*

Location	Frequency	Duration in Hours
School Cafeteria-Breakfast	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	1.5
School Cafeteria-Lunch	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	1.5
School Bus Ride #1-	Twice in the morning Twice in the afternoon	3.0
School Bus Ride #2- Mixed Population Bus	Twice in the morning Twice in the afternoon	3.0
Classroom	Once per core content area per student participant	32.0
Hallways	Five times per day, 10 days	5.0

Students from Waldenburg Acres can be found in certain areas of Kearney Middle School at certain times of day. For example, Waldenburg Acres students who arrive at school on two busses typically go directly to the cafeteria. Based on my natural observations, combined with my morning walk to my office during which time I pass the glass wall that separates the cafeteria from the hallway, I do not recall seeing any single-family home students in the cafeteria in the morning unless they are part of the few middle- and upper-class students who are friends with the Waldenburg Acres students at school. All students at Kearney are allowed in the building when they arrive. The school has an official policy that all students dropped off before 7:00 have to wait in the office, but this policy is not enforced. Students arrive as early as 6:30 and until the first bell rings at 7:20, they are free to go wherever they would like to in the school. Since the interior design

of the school consist of two connecting squares of hallways, most of the 1,163 students travel with their friends in predictable patterns through both squares, repeatedly passing by the glass cafeteria wall making the transparency of who eats their breakfast at school evident. A similar separation occurs during lunch when most of the Waldenburg Acres students sit together each day with their self-separation of the females at one table and the males at another. After lunch is finished, students have the option of going outside, going to the gym, or going in the hallway to play a board game. This possible movement of my informants could be part of my lunchtime field observations. The specific days of the week were selected due to the perception of some of the adult personnel at Kearney frequently stating that Mondays and Fridays are difficult days for the students at Kearney who live in Waldenburg Acres. The belief is that on Monday the student population has difficulty adjusting to the rules in school after being at home all weekend. Friday is equally as difficult, since they know they are going to be home all weekend.

Bus rides were selected due to rumors of rowdiness on the bus that transports the Waldenburg Acres students. The bus that I refer to as Bus #1 is the bus that only has Waldenburg Acres students. The bus that I refer to as Bus #2 has a mix of Waldenburg Acres students and students who live in the surrounding single-family home neighborhoods. Over the years, a few parents of Waldenburg Acres students do not allow their children to ride the busses. They provide transportation for their children for reasons that have included a preference for their children to not be around the children living in their neighborhood. Reported by parents, a reason for avoiding Bus #2 is to avoid the comment of “trailer trash” coming from the single-family home students.

During my field observations in classrooms I anticipate my role to transform into participant observation occasionally, since I carry with me the dual role of researcher and Learning Consultant. My role as researcher is primary, but as the Learning Consultant at Kearney, it might

present as unnatural for me to be in a classroom without assisting in classroom activities. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to this as dependability or accounting for “factors of instability” motivated by research design (p. 298). Classrooms are places that are as unpredictable as they are predictable. In times when my assistance as a Learning Consultant might be needed, my official role in that moment could shift, but my observational role would not.

Another primary source of my data collection is the transcripts of participant interviews. Along with my research journal, reliance on my analysis of field notes to identify the emerging themes forms the basis of my interview questions. My intention is to use data collected from interviews as representative of the life worlds that intersect at Kearney Middle School.

I am cognizant of the power differential that occurs when I am in the position of being the interviewer and the interviewees have no control over the selection of questions. This positionality might cause disconcerting feelings in some participants. To counter this, LeCompte and Schensul (1999a) suggested an icebreaker as in telling the participants a little about me as the researcher and the purpose in wanting to interview them. Weiss (1993) described the idea behind interviewing as wanting to learn from participants and to share this interview with them. Furthermore, Weiss (1993) contended that the first interview was about the researcher and participant getting to know each other. Five of the parent participants in this research know me as a Kearney’s Learning Consultant and not as a researcher. Weiss (1993) stated that the first set of interviews has an underlying purpose of establishing the rhythm of the relationship between participants and the interviewer.

Table 2 below outlines the frequency and type of interviews I conducted with my participants.

Table 2: *Type, Frequency, and Duration of Interviews*

Type of Interview	Informants	Frequency	Approximate Duration	Approximate Total Time
Exploratory Open-Ended	Students	Once	30 minutes	10 Hours
	Parents	Once	30 minutes	
	Teachers	Once	30 minutes	
Semi-Structured	Students	Twice	60 minutes	40 Hours
	Parents	Twice	60 minutes	
	Teachers	Twice	60 minutes	

As establishing trusting relationships is important, the initial interviews were exploratory and open-ended at the same time. Exploratory, open-ended interviews are positioned first to become familiar with the participants' lives and second to transition to themes related to my research questions that emerged from analyzing my field notes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). The open-ended format allowed exploration of new domains which might be found in field observation analysis. Examples of questions that were used in this first stage of interviewing with teacher participants were as follows:

- How long have you been teaching at Kearny Middle School?
- When you think back do you remember what it was that drew you to teaching?
- What are some of the highlights of your teaching tenure?
- What is your view of the middle school learner?
- Many teachers report that they are dismayed at all the changes that have happened to the teaching profession over the past few decades. Would you share with me what, in your opinion, are the top three changes in the teaching profession that you wish would have never happened?
- Some of the literature reports that students from different levels of social class are either at an advantage or disadvantage in school. Can you comment on this statement and add your own experience to your answer?

I used probing questions by following the train of thought of participant answers.

My second round of interviews used semi-structured questions to reveal narratives of the students' experiences. Loosely bounded questions with a primary purpose of listening to participants tell their life stories is suggested by Reismann (1993). Positioning semi-structured interviews second in this sequence was to clarify emerging themes and to establish a base the last series of semi-structured interviews (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999c). Examples of questions from semi-structured narrative of experience interviews with student participants are as follows:

- What is your view of school?
- Could you walk me through which parts of attending Kearney Middle School are your favorite?
- Could you walk me through anything about attending Kearney Middle School that may bother you?
- Do you think your experience at Kearney Middle School is different from the kids that do not live in your neighborhood? If it is, can you help me to understand in what ways it might be different?
- What types of after school activities do you participate in and with whom do you participate?
- Can you help me understand if there advantages and disadvantages to living in Waldenburg Acres?

These questions were designed to explore the experiences and perspectives of student participants. My intent was to get close to the stories of participants and mirror their voices in the written representation of data.

The parents participated in three rounds of semi-structured interviews. The questions for the second round were: I would like to review a little of what we talked about in our first interview.

Is there anything you would like to add or change?

- What drew you to this community?
- Is there anything you would change about the Waldenburg Acres community?

- How would you describe your involvement in school as a parent of a middle school student? Do you perceive Kearney as a welcoming environment for all parents? What suggestions might you have for Kearney Middle School?
- Do you think your experience as a Kearney Middle School parent is different from families that do not live in your community? If so, then in what do you see as the differences?
- How does your child spend their leisurely time? Can you walk me through the typical after school experience of your child?

My intent is to develop a level of comfort and trust to enable parent participants to share their lives and their children's experience in school. Appendix B presents the questions that were used in each of the rounds for all participants.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data was accomplished by using similar coding methods for transcriptions of field notes and interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) warned that data coding should be about moving closer to data and not about manipulating data. My primary purpose is to look for shared meanings across all data. Frequency of patterns found in the data determined my next focus in the field (Rouna, 2005).

Data coding centered on what LeCompte & Schensul (1999b) referred to as the development of domains and sub-domains. The use of domains and sub-domains assisted in recognizing patterns that emerged through: declaration, similarity, frequency, omission and co-occurrence (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). My research methods for this dissertation were the methods I used in my pilot study where the development of domains and sub-domains were key to refinement of theory and data from the field. My initial question was whether the homework help offered at the clubhouse at Waldenburg Acres benefitted student achievement. After coding the data into domains and sub-domains throughout the research process, my findings were that the homework help time elicited a primary benefit of community building. The Waldenburg Acres

students viewed homework help as an extra-curricular activity. The academic benefits were of minimal influence and were not the primary reason students attended. This example can be sorted into one of the three different coded outlines develop by Boyatzis (as cited in Rouna, 2005). Boyatis developed a sorting convention for coding data coding that I used alongside my domain and sub-domain coding. Theory driven codes are grounded in critical theory, prior research codes are grounded my literature review, and data driven codes (as in the example above) emerge directly from the data collection (Boyatis, as cited in Rouna, 2005).

Validity

Maxwell (2005) contended that categorical considerations for research design must be considered for the establishment of validity. Maxwell's (2005. pp.110-113) guide to validity was used as my guide during the research process:

- Intensive, long-term involvement
- "Rich" data
- Respondent validation
- Searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases
- Triangulation

My research design allowed for numerous hours in the field. I cannot separate myself from my research site as I am on site for 35 hours per week as Kearney's Learning Consultant. I had the opportunity to conduct persistent observation by virtue of my employment at the school. The "rich" data category is described by Maxwell (2005) as data coming from interviews that are "intensive" and provides a "rich detailed picture of what is going on" in the field. I anticipated my interview transcripts would include descriptive life stories that could assist in my data analysis process. I

interpreted this attention to “rich” data also meant a variation of data, which my research design considered.

Respondent validation is also known as “member checks” where research participants can read and review my work along the way to check my representation of the data. Checks on representation occurred during interviews when asking for clarification of what a participant had said. I conducted a negative case analysis where I read and reread my data to rule out competing explanations for occurrences in the data that do not fit. Maxwell (2005) explained that negative case analysis involved also asking others for feedback as a way to check my own “biases and assumptions and flaws in my logic or methods.”

Triangulation refers to the use of a variety of data sources. Maxwell (2005) warned that establishing triangulation did not necessarily mean that this process increased validity because it is possible to elicit the same bias from all data sources. Therefore, Maxwell (2005) advised, “validity threats are ruled out by evidence, not methods.” I plan to remain close to the evidence in my data by personally transcribing all field notes and interview transcripts.

Given that I work at Kearney, I have to come to terms that I am part of my research. For the past six years, I have been living a daily existence professionally where stories having to do with my research interest outlined in this dissertation are commonplace and present themselves without provocation. Interaction with students, parents, and colleagues present themselves, resulting in deep personal reflection on my part. Being able to frame my professional experience through a research paradigm offered clarification to the daily transactions at Kearney Middle School. I have been engaged in a self-directed study of matters of social class and school before beginning this dissertation. I worry about predisposed notions I hold that come from my professional experience. I am concerned about my personal bias in being raised in a working-class

family and the unlikeliness for me to be a PhD candidate, writing this dissertation. My dual role as researcher among colleagues and their Learning Consultant is worrisome. The mindset with which I approach this research requires a constant review and resetting of my own bias.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTIONS OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS IN THE STUDY

During the spring and summer of 2017, I spent considerable time in the Waldenburg Acres neighborhood conducting interviews, walking the premises, and getting a feel for the community. My time was spent interviewing student participants, largely in their homes, in the clubhouse, or on the front lawn of the clubhouse. I had opportunities to make small talk with community members while walking the neighborhood, waiting to ride the school bus, or looking for participant homes. One participant family volunteered to take me on a walking tour of Waldenburg Acres and the surrounding woods. We walked the wooded trail that led to the state park that bordered the back of Waldenburg Acres. We came upon a clearing with a fire pit that teenagers from the trailer park had made years ago. Teens assembled logs and tree stumps in a circle in this secretive place. Due to its elusive location, this space was an important part of growing up and gaining independence for Waldenburg Acres teens.

One of the first encounters I had with anyone other than my research participants was with an elderly lady who asked me if I was a “caseworker” when I was walking to the bus stop. When I asked her why she asked that, she responded that because I was dressed nice, she assumed I would be from social services doing a home visit. Her assumption that I was a caseworker was automatic and she assumed visits from caseworkers occurred often with families of Waldenburg Acres. This brief interaction exposed her belief that unfamiliar people who were dressed professionally and parked at the clubhouse could be from the Department of Social Services. Until that moment, I had not thought about the possibility of situations that might require assistance from social service organizations.

An entirely different incident left me thinking about the atmosphere of suspicion permeating the Waldenburg Acres neighborhood. This incident happened during the tour provided

by Alice Collins and her mother, Heather Collins. The family dog came along and at one point she was sniffing in a lot. The home owner came to her front door and glared at us through the screen with her hands on her hips. I asked Heather why the woman was staring at us and she replied, “Because she thinks our dog is going to poop on her lawn. So, what if she does. I have a bag and anyways she already went.” As we passed by the woman continued peering out at us. Alice, who was holding the leash, turned around and began walking backwards, exchanging glares with the woman. I was surprised that given her age, Alice did not hold back in glaring at the woman. The situation began to get uncomfortable until Heather convinced her daughter to turn-around and keep walking.

A similar encounter occurred when I was driving. When stopped at a four way stop at 6:30 in the morning, another driver and myself were hesitating as to who should cross over into the intersection first. Since we were perpendicular to each other, if we had crossed together we would have collided. I inched forward and then stopped, she inched forward and then stopped. I inched forward again and realized I was not certain on which street I was, I stopped and motioned for her to go ahead. She rolled down the window of her green, early model SUV and slowly moved through the intersection with her head on the outside of the driver’s side window. Looking right at me she screamed, “Are you fucking kidding me?” Not only did I feel victimized from being verbally assaulted, I finally understood why the adult residents of Waldenburg Acres who participated in this research said that they had no interest in meeting their neighbors on a level any deeper than just saying hello. In the words of Meghan Walker, “You never know what you’ll get, so I just keep to myself.”

In other neighborhoods, people are curious about the presence and intent of strangers who they have not seen previously. In other neighborhoods, suspicious people guard their property from

all intruders, including pets. Likewise, road rage can happen anywhere. But, the physical layout of Waldenburg Acres left the residents vulnerable to an immediate and suspicious or confrontational existence. As noted in school, adults' desire to remain isolated from their neighbors had similar effects on some children. Space at Kearney was crowded and close, just as it was in Waldenburg Acres. Some trailer park kids matched their parents' preferences for remaining separate from the larger community at Kearney.

6th Graders

The 6th graders in this study were selected purposefully as in one female and one male student. Their situation was unique, as this research was conducted in the last quarter of their 6th grade school year and they could not conceive of cumulative effects of being a student at Kearney by the end of 8th grade. Perspectives and understanding among Waldenburg Acres students is different in the 8th grade than in the 6th grade. Coming from elementary school, the 6th graders had to adjust to grade level student population quadrupling, with four elementary schools merging into one 6th grade class at Kearney. A common error trailer park kids made while in the 6th grade at Kearney was telling others where they lived. In the first quarter of the 6th grade school year, Waldenburg Acres students were unaware that others might judge them for where they lived and that could influence friendship possibilities. As the year played out, outside friendships for some 6th grade trailer park kids were made and unmade at high rates.

Alice Collins.

My initial impression of Alice Collins included worrying that she was going to have a difficult time academically in the 6th grade. I met her mother, Heather, in late summer of 2016. We reviewed and renewed the 504 Plan that had been implemented for Alice in elementary school. Heather shared that Alice suffered from absence seizures that inhibited her from being able to

attend in the classroom when they occur. Alice had a 504 Plan to aid in providing her equal access to curriculum and instruction. As the school year unfolded, Alice had more challenges socially than academically.

Two physical features could result in Alice standing out in a crowd. The first was her long, heavy hair that was usually pulled away from her face. It traveled down her back, stopping just above her waist. The second was the propensity for her eyes to roll backwards instantaneously when her seizures were occurring, flashing only the whites of her eyes. Alice literally blinked herself out of her seizures. Heather had found that this split-second, involuntary movement of her daughter's eyes could be misinterpreted as sarcasm to those unaware of her condition. Alice had been known to be overly assertive with others when she felt the need to support herself or her friends. For example, a single-family home kid, who she reported as her good friend, came to her locker crying for being teased. Alice reported that she went up to the teasing students and said, "If you want to get to her, you're going to have to go through me first."

Students at Kearney typically avoided speaking with one another in such ways when conflicts arose. They might have taken sides, they might have sought out guidance from their grade level school counselor, or they might have gotten their parents involved. Face-to-face invitations of physical aggression were rare among students at Kearney. Directly confrontational students, like Alice, stood-out at Kearney for having social difficulties. They disrupted the middle school way of speaking passively-aggressively within earshot of the intended target. Alice stood out for her assertive nature, or what she referred to as "being rude."

Social difficulties during her 6th grade school year centered on one incident that had a lasting effect on her inability to blend in at school. In early winter, a rumor about Alice filled the 6th grade hallways. One day, Heather had to be at work early so Alice's father drove her to school.

He was a smoker. Alice explained that when he was upset, he smoked. According to Alice, the day he drove her to school he was upset that he had to get up early, so he smoked in his truck on the way to school. When Alice entered school, she smelled like smoke. According to Alice, a group of boys spread a rumor she had been smoking weed. Each time Alice opened her locker that day, a heightened smell of smoke rolled out from her locker and reignited the boys' belief that Alice was smoking weed. By third hour, Alice was being stared at by other 6th grade students. She became aware of the rumor being spread about her. Alice sought out an assistant principal to help her with the situation. Due to the embarrassing nature of the rumor, Alice could not make it through the school day. Her mother picked her up from school, took her to lunch at Coney Island, and talked with her about standing up for herself in school tomorrow. It took a few days for things to calm down for Alice. The administration of the school was strategic in helping ending the rumor by waiting in the wings each time she went to her locker between classes to listen for other students accusing Alice of being a pot smoker. This unfortunate incident shadowed Alice everywhere during her 6th grade school year. Her father's smoking habit and the subsequent smell carried by Alice became a permanent marker, eliminating hopes of becoming part of the popular group. Alice had a special term for that time in her life, referring to how much "the incident" changed her life. She described it this way:

First semester I kind of changed and I was just like really, like I was like really nice first because like I wanted to have like a bunch of friends and then when the rumor spread um, I started not to care about what people say and I just go up to them and say, "If you have something to say, say it to my face," because that's what my mom always says to me, to make them quit talking about it...like I was really kind to people, I always cared about what like, cared what people say about me and now I actually don't. It kind of made me like tough and like brave.

In the beginning of 6th grade, the social part of the school year started out as promising for most students who wanted to be popular. However, females from Waldenburg Acres experienced

short-lived success. Alice believed that to maintain status as a member of the popular 6th grade girls group some specific criteria must be in place:

I think it's their clothes, their personality, um, like what they do after school like sports or stuff, um, I think like where, where they go on a daily basis like Starbucks or whatever. Their clothes it's like Aviva, Vineyard Vines, Addidas, and high-top Converse.

Alice owned some items of clothing that matched the brands on her list. The distinction was the popular girls wore only designer and name brand clothing to school. The amount and type of name brand and designer clothing that Alice possessed was no match to what the popular girls wore. Her inability to match their clothing relegated her to a friendship group with lesser status in school. Alice had participated in extracurricular activities that included ballet, gymnastics, softball on a team that Heater coached. Lasting one season or session, her extracurricular activities were difficult to sustain as long-term commitments. During her 6th grade school year, Alice was not involved in any extracurricular activities. While Alice had large amounts of unscheduled after school free time, the lack of sufficient money and transportation kept her from doing *things* after school like the popular kids.

Alice lived with her mother, father, maternal grandfather, and the family dog. Heather paid \$7,000 cash for their 1992 singlewide, three-bedroom home that she described as being the former “party home” in the neighborhood. According to Heather, their family water bill is usually somewhere near \$60 per month. Along with the charge for their family dog, the monthly lot rent payment for the Collins family was somewhere between \$660 on the low end, and \$700, on the high end. Variations depended on water usage and if they received violations since their last lot rent payment. During our interviews, Heather reiterated that her family lived in Waldenburg Acres because it was *cheap*.

Heather became pregnant with Alice when she was 18 years old. From Alice’s birth until she was in the third grade, she lived with her maternal grandfather and Heather in a house that she missed dearly. Alice recalled playing with her neighborhood friends in the life size dollhouse that her grandfather built for her in her backyard. Moving to Waldenburg Acres was a logical decision given that Heather’s father had lost the house in which they were living. Heather decided to move into a trailer with her father and Alice when she lost her job of 10 years as a latchkey worker for a local school district:

You know and I’m just, um, and so now my dad lost the house and it was an apartment, or I told him, “Dad, an apartment for three bedrooms,” I’m like, “that’s going to be like eight, nine-hundred dollars.” I go, “let’s just find a trailer park. We can buy a trailer, pay the lot rent, which is about five, this is the best place out of everything.”

Apartment rental costs in Larimer Heights ranged from \$860 per month for a one-bedroom, one-bathroom, 700 square-foot unit to \$2,800 per month for three-bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, 1900 square-foot unit. From the perspective of being able to live within the borders of an upscale suburban community, Waldenburg Acres was the most cost-effective option.

Heather complained about the way Waldenburg Acres was managed. She went into detail and depth with complaints, often returning to each area of discontent repeatedly. Heather had received violations from the park management including: entrance stairs (porch) needed to be painted, unruly dog needed to be on a leash, a fishing boat was parked in the yard, a couch was in her yard and the skirting around her home was dented and missing in spots. Her response to violations for rule infractions were explained in the example where Heather addressed her frustrations over the violation against her dog. She transitioned into the difficulty she had securing a spot in the storage building used by residents of Waldenburg Acres with recreational vehicles, campers or boats:

Yeah, that's what they call unruly is because when the maintenance men walk by and they walk up to her, she barks at them. Well you're a stranger. You don't come here on a regular [basis], what dog is going to be, okay come in my yard. Nope, nope. The kids, all the kids, when Alice did hang-out with the kids in the park and the kids came over and she'd bark like she did when you went in, and I'd tell her to stop. They'd come in. Yeah, when you first come up she's a little aggressive she don't know who you are. And I told them, any dog like that, I've searched it, cause I'm like, I'm pretty sure one day I'm going to end up going to court with these people. They just like to fight with me over the dog or the boat, cause I told them I go, take me to court for that boat. I'm going to tell them, the lawyer, however they do it. Subpoena all the people that signed up for that boat cause I betcha there's a lot of boats that got ahead of me. And it's not fair.

Heather's unhappiness with having already lived in a single-family home and now having to attend to rules that she felt were restrictive and arbitrary surfaced during all interviews. Specifically, Heather felt rules were unfair to her in the way that her dog was *not* unruly, that any dog would bark and jump when strangers approached; that the fishing boat in her yard was there because Waldenburg Acres management continued to move names ahead of her name on the wait list for the storage facility. Additionally, she shared that the violation for the couch in her yard arrived one day after it was thrown in the cleanup dumpster that the park management ordered twice per year. She shared that the skirting around her house was dented when she purchased her home from the Waldenburg Acres real estate team, so Heather felt that "if it was good enough then, it is good enough now." The missing skirting, she claimed, was due to the feral cats that roamed the trailer park.

Heather frequently mentioned taking legal action against the park management. There were numerous conflicts between Heather, the office secretary, and the park manager. The protocol for filing a formal complaint against the management company was to send an email or write a letter and send it to their corporate office. The secretary in the office at Waldenburg Acres would not provide Heather with the corporate email address. Instead, the secretary assured Heather that if she told her what she was upset about, then she would email the corporate office on her behalf. This

practice of hiding the management company's email address backed Heather's claim of inequitable rule enforcement. After first meeting Heather, I wondered if she erroneously perceived the purpose of my research was to reveal to the public that Waldenburg Acres was poorly managed and that residents who were in vulnerable financial positions were being exploited. Heather continually talked about the management of Waldenburg Acres and how she had been personally wronged in situation after situation.

Heather thought she had received seven violations over four years of residency. She was unsure of how many violations placed her at risk for eviction. The eviction process involved the trailer park buying the house back after a note is pinned to your door stating the eviction process had begun. Heather stated, "Yep, they'll write you up after so many writes [violations] they can evict you right out of the park, even though you bought the trailer from the park that's been placed inside the park." Evicted residents had to pay \$500 to the management company to inspect their home before the Waldenburg Acres on-site real estate company would buy back homes. An option to move the home was available, but few residents could afford the exorbitant fees for this service. The mental health effects of living in a community with a self-elected pseudo-police force might add stress to some families. Heather felt powerless and vulnerable. Some families might be fearful of eviction because their children would have to leave Larimer Heights Schools and start over again somewhere else.

The daily presence of the Larimer Heights Police "rolling through here" as Heather put it added an unclear dimension to life in Waldenburg Acres. Adults and adolescents mentioned the police presence in Waldenburg Acres as commonplace. The cause for the police presence might have been the suspected drug activity in the trailer park. Disputes between neighbors, break-ins, and domestic situations were mentioned as reasons that the police frequently patrolled Waldenburg

Acres. The police presence was well known in the outside community and may have influenced their perceptions of the residents of Waldenburg Acres. Residents may have felt safer knowing their community was on the radar of the local police department. Conversely, police presence may have added to the trailer park kids feeling marginalized, as they knew that the police typically were in a neighborhood to maintain law and order. Different feelings emerged when trailer park kids talked about growing up in a community where police cars *rolling through* were part of the daily backdrop of life. Some trailer park kids felt safer because of the police presence, but most associated police presence with illegal drug activity. Even with police presence, Heather kept her curtains shut all day to avoid people from seeing her valuables.

Heather was an involved and organized mother. She kept track of her daughter to the extent that Alice had a binder with checklists created by Heather. The binder defined what Alice had to do when she came home from school. The list of items included personal hygiene tasks like brush your hair and wash your face, and household chores like do the dishes and take the dog outside. Homework checks were part of the binder system that reminded Alice to start her homework before her mother arrived home. Alice checked each item she completed so that when Heather arrived home from work she would know what was completed. Alice used her binder organization system even on days when Heather did not have to work.

Heather earned \$10.00 an hour, working part-time at a self-storage facility where she rented storage units and made sure accounts were current. Two hundred dollars was garnished from each of her bi-weekly paychecks to pay for her car, which was her only option for purchasing an automobile due to her low credit score. Heather shared that her take home pay was \$600 a month. Her husband, and Alice's father, whom Heather married in the summer of 2016, worked as a rough carpenter. Heather frequently worried about the day when she would start paying back her student

loans, which were in deferment due to financial hardship. Each time the student loan servicing center phoned Heather, she told them to either lower her lot rent, or tell --- College to let her go to school and finish her degree. Heather frequently explained to the school loan collections department that she could not pay her school loans until she had a degree and could work for more than \$10.00 an hour. If they would like her to start making payments now, then she suggested they find a way to lower her lot rent at Waldenburg Acres or find a way to convince --- College to let her enroll in classes and finish her degree.

Heather's choice of a career college as higher education was important because it was an extension of the cultural capital available to her. She did not know anyone in her circle of friends or in her family, who had earned an undergraduate degree. Heather explained a recent interaction she had by phone with a student loan collections officer:

I don't even know if I could go buy a house with student loans sitting on my thing [credit report]. I'm not sure but every, what is it, I don't know how long they're going to let me do it, they put my loans on hold for a while and they did it this one time, I did it once and I don't know how many times I can do that but I told them I go how are you going to get, honey I bring home like, six-hundred dollars a month. Like what are you going to take from me? Like all my money goes to bills. If you take two-hundred dollars from me, like we're not having food. So is the state going to start giving me food stamps for it, you know what I mean like?

When she does begin to repay her loans, Heather's volatile financial situation will become more fragile. She was not alone in this predicament as two other parents, Lucy Mason and Helen Knight, attended the same career college for similar extended time frames and with similar curricular and loan complications.

The worst part of Heather's 10 years of college was not the repayment of her loans; rather it was the feeling that Heather had missed Alice's entire childhood that she can never renew:

No school will take ---'s credits so I'd have to start all over. I missed her whole childhood. Two years ago, then I had, I got pregnant with twins, got an ectopic pregnancy, told me I can never have kids again. Yeah, they told me I can never

have kids again. So, I can never even make it up. I can never get to watch her like another kid, grow again. Like I missed out on everything.

Heather's frustration was understandable as nothing in her situation was gained to advance her life financially, but she felt a lot was lost in being unavailable to experience the early years of Alice's childhood. If an option other than a career college had been more readily available for Heather, her life and living situation might have looked different.

In contrast to knowing how to make ends meet on limited funds, Heather asked me about the first step to buying a house. She admitted that she took opportunities to learn from others on how to navigate the first time purchase of a single-family home:

I don't know anything about buying houses. I ask any, cause I don't, the worst thing about it is my dad don't know much and I don't have a mom. So, everything I've done I've kind of done on my own and so when I know people that know a little bit, I'm like, I start asking questions like, "How do I buy a house? What's the first step?" Like should I go in and see if we even qualify for a loan? Or you know and see what the, I'm like, I'm not sure what the steps of a lot of you know.

I shared with her that I know the area about eight miles north of Waldenburg Acres was deemed a rural area. Heather and her husband might qualify for a Rural Development Loan, that could be obtained with no money down. She quickly wrote down the words, rural development RD Loan on a scrap piece of paper on her kitchen counter and appeared committed to finding out more information.

While Heather experienced growing pains in learning how to get ahead financially and become a single-family homeowner, Alice experienced similar growing pains with friendships. During her 6th grade school year, Alice had difficulty maintaining friendships with a variety of girls. She explained that she was "confused about the drama" concerning how to make and maintain friends. The group of girls from the trailer park who were in the 6th grade at the time of this study had broken up into two or three distinct factions. Only one trailer park girl was

intermittently successful at being part of the popular 6th grade girl group. Alice defined the qualities of a popular 6th grade girl as including “the brands of clothes you wear, how you speak, and what you do outside of school.” These qualities eliminated many Waldenburg Acres females from being accepted into the popular group. When Alice wore her name brand items, she was sandwiched between multitudes of 6th grade girls who wore designer clothing from head to toe daily. Some residents of Waldenburg Acres learned to speak defensively as they were frequently placed in the position of having to over explain their place of residence. Extracurricular opportunities were limited for some trailer park kids due to limited resources and lack of transportation. If the defining criteria outlined by Alice were true, the avenues offering entrée into the popular girls group were challenged by factors outside of the control of the trailer park kids. What Alice did not understand was the idea that the social history of the school demonstrated that successful and long-term friendships between trailer park kids and kids who live in single-family homes were extremely rare.

Despite her confusion surrounding a dwindling friendship group, and like other student participants in this study, Alice claimed to have a lot of friends who lived in single-family homes. Her perception of having friends who lived in single-family homes became skewed when she named only one friend that lived in a single-family home. As far as being able to spend time with this friend outside of the school day, Alice and the other adult and student participants in this study referred to the busy schedules of the single-family home students. Single-family home students were rarely available for social time outside of the school day.

The instability Alice experienced in forming lasting friendships during the 6th grade was shared by Heather who perceived the standoffish nature of single-family home parents towards her to be directly related to her age:

She's going through that girl phase with all that girl drama but I think a lot of the richer parents are like, I've met a lot of parents but none of them will let, none of the kids parents will let them go to this house. I don't know because I'm only 32 years old and they think I'm a partier. They don't really know me cause all these parents they're in their forties. They're way older than me, they're ten years older and I don't look 32 either. I look like I had her at 14, you know what I mean.

On another occasion, Heather referred to her husband's appearance as a factor that contributed to her daughter's isolation from single-family home kids:

Sometimes when I meet some of these parents and they just look at me weird. And then you know I meet them and Alice said, "I want you to meet them so they can sleep over." So, I'll meet them at concerts and then Alice will ask them to sleep over and it's always "No." So, I don't know what vibe I'm giving them. I don't know if it's my husband that's scaring them off with his big old grizzly beard. I have no idea.

Missing in Heather's understanding was an awareness of differences in cultural capital between the Larimer Heights single-family home communities and the Waldenburg Acres community. What she perceived as a blockage of friendships for her daughter as related to her age or her husband's appearance were strategic moves by the single-family home parents to be mindful of assuring their children only associated with others who had similar advantages and privilege. Economically advantaged parents being strategic about who were their children's friends escaped Heather's understanding. Being unaware of the magnitude of difference in privilege, Heather assumed the standoffish nature she experienced from single-family home parents was due to age difference, or the appearance of a beard.

Heather practiced the same parental discretion that she and Alice were confused about. A similar logic was used when Heather exercised control over friendships Alice could have among the girls who lived in Waldenburg Acres. Alice was allowed time with the daughter of Heather's good friend who lived right around the corner from her, and one more neighborhood girl who Heather described as having a father who was similarly selective. Even with these two friends, Alice spent most of her out of school time alone.

Some adult participants in this study shared their perceptions that the children and teens of Waldenburg Acres were unsupervised. They found this bothersome mainly because there were no sidewalks in Waldenburg Acres and space was limited outdoors. The speed limit of 15 miles per hour was often overlooked. Parents fear for the safety of the children and teens that were allowed to roam the trailer park during their leisure time. Seeing young people walking or playing in the street surfaced as one of the most prominent markers of adult participants when deciding who their child could be friends with. Heather was no exception to this friendship filter shared by the other adult participants:

A lot of these parents, these kids roam the streets. A lot of these parents don't pay attention to their kids, either. I'm like a mother hen. I'm not letting any of those kids influence my kid to do anything. There's only two kids that she plays with in this park, --- down the street here and then my friend lives around the corner.

Heather was careful about what she heard in the neighborhood about break-ins conducted by resident teens. She was in fear that unsupervised teens were going to break-in and take her TV and the video games that the family had:

I don't think some of these parents are home to be honest, I think they're unsupervised. A lot of these kids that are causing the issues I think they're unsupervised cause these parents are like it's a trailer park. Who's going to mess with them? So, we're just gonna let them do that they want cause you see them at night, just the cops roll through here at night. Every night they're rolling through here.

Heather's understanding of the containment of the trailer park as a false safety net for parents was shared by six of the adult participants. What the isolated location provided was the perpetuation of language of living in the "inside" or living on the "outside" of the trailer park, which mirrored the language often used in prisons. The nightly police presence did much to add to the prison like feeling and might impact the identity formation of the children living in Waldenburg Acres when

they knew that theirs was the only neighborhood in Larimer Heights with a daily and nightly police presence.

David Stevens.

I've never seen a house like this, you know, we're they've landed that in any of their shows, you know. It's always the singlewide, you know, trashy looking home that they're pulling up to get somebody to take them to jail or whatever.

(Sheila Stevens, Personal Interview, 5/15/2017)

Sheila Stevens felt frustrated about the portrayal of manufactured home communities in the mainstream media. Some battered doublewide and singlewide homes from various decades of design were among better maintained homes in Waldenburg Acres, but they were the exception rather than the rule. Homes that looked unkempt had items outside the home that in single-family home neighborhoods, would be in the garage or the basement. The inability to afford home repairs, flowers or shrubbery, coupled with items outside the home resulted in a bleak looking place of residence for some residents of Waldenburg Acres. The bias of media portrayal of manufactured home communities serving the sole purpose of providing safe harbor for social deviants living in run-down manufactured homes bothered Sheila. She was correct in her observations that media portrayals fed the long-standing marginalization of people who lived in manufactured homes.

The home that David Stevens shared with his mother, father and their family dog was different from any media norms. The Stevens home was most likely, the nicest, if not then definitely one of the nicest homes in Waldenburg Acres. The natural brick fireplace, centered on the largest living room wall and visible from both the kitchen and dining room added a homey feel to the open concept design of their home. To the left of the front door and separated from the open space of the living, kitchen, and dining rooms was a sizeable room that shared the hard wood flooring and traditional décor running throughout the home. This separate space was filled with

full-sized arcade games that David enjoyed playing with his friends and father. While interviewing Shelia, we sat at the kitchen island while David was in his bedroom. When I interviewed David, we sat outside, away from his home on a picnic table that the Stevens had placed under a large oak tree, outside the boundaries of their lot.

The Stevens family was fortunate in being able to move their home to the end of the street they were living on when another home was moved. This meant they moved from being between two homes to a location that allowed for more privacy. Now, they have a neighbor on one side of their home and an expansive field on the other, which ended where a dense wooded area began. Being located on the end of the street allowed the Stevens family to have an ample sized stamped concrete patio that runs nearly the full length of their home on the field facing side. The approach to their patio was a path of brick pavers, lined by carefully arranged, healthy begonias and other flowers that were attended to by the Stevens family. No shortage of wildlife existed outside of the Stevens home. While interviewing David we frequently stopped to watch squirrels bury nuts, noted the song of the various birds perched in the large oak trees and at one time, witnessed a turkey trotting across the field. According to David, our wildlife sightings were common occurrences for him, confirmed by their family dog, who did not react to the wildlife activity with half the excitement we did.

What residents of Waldenburg Acres had grown to accept was the idea that they were independent homeowners, yet lived within the confines of a community management system that all participants referred to as the “park management.” In my first interview with Sheila, her husband Dustin was present. The unprofessional manor in which Waldenburg Acres was managed came to the surface in the context of asking them to respond to complaints about the management of the trailer park I had heard from other residents. Shelia noted that one of her neighbors, before

her home was moved, remarked at how someone was moving their home to the end of their street, which was not alarming. What was alarming was the information shared by Shelia's neighbor included the price the anonymous family was paying for the move. Shelia described in the commentary, her neighbor was aghast someone would pay so much money to have a home moved, to a different location within the same *park*. Shelia and Dustin Stevens were very private people. Sheila did not reveal to her neighbor that she was actually talking about her. Sheila was upset that someone employed by the management company that runs Waldenburg Acres felt it was within their professional boundary to share such personal information.

Mr. Stevens (Dustin) was employed as a property manager and worked for the same management company that managed Waldenburg Acres. He worked in the apartment management division of the company. Dustin chimed in with noting that he had to redirect, or direct some of the park management at different times. In the past decade, the position of Waldenburg Acres park manager had changed hands no less than three times. One example of Dustin asserting his guidance regarded the drainage ditch that ran perpendicular to their home, across the expanse of field outside their front door. Dustin had to alert the park management it was their job to ensure that space was kept free of weeds and other natural growth that tended to take over the space when left unattended.

A key benefit of being able to speak with Dustin and Sheila together was Shelia's candid interpretation about the lack of higher education of their neighbors. She felt that might add to inability to follow through when dissatisfied with arbitrary decisions made by the park management. Her comment was followed up by Dustin who explained the same process that Heather Collins had explained for complaints from park residents. Dustin confirmed Shelia's belief that neighbors possessed a lack of follow through as explained below:

My experiences is that when people complain is look, we'll give you the tools to contact management. This is the appeal up. Our company does everything in

writing, we're not phone calls, and they won't do it. They won't make that step. Look, if you want this resolved, if you know, write a letter and that, you know, I don't tell who I work for, but I know there is a PO Box and our company is receptive of these letters, but they won't do it. Some people want to complain but they don't want to take the steps to resolve the issue.

Shelia interpreted the lack of follow through as related to educational levels, "...and that might be the difference in us, you know, and some people here. The level of education, so that they won't go that next step." Shelia and Dustin were two of three adult participants with Bachelor's Degrees. The lack of follow through they had observed could also be attributed to lack of power and learning from experience that resolutions in a system where residents are powerless, rarely occurred. Another possibility included the fear of retaliation. Many residents of Waldenburg Acres realized that if they were evicted, their children lose access to Larimer Heights Schools. It was almost as if the residents were positioned to endure a fight or flight state of mind.

Dustin assured that matters of complaint were followed up on at the corporate office, but hinted at the fear of retaliation:

Maybe, maybe they're afraid of what management is going to do because those letters, so like Waldenburg Acres, the way our company is designed, when someone does write a letter, it doesn't just go to his boss, it goes to his boss, his boss, his boss, his boss, boss. Once those letters get delivered they're automatically spread out so there's lots of questions that start to happen, and but if you don't write that letter no one along that chain even knows.

This was reminiscent of Heather Collins' troublesome case where a dismissive attitude towards Heather kept her from access to information she needed to submit her complaint. I experienced this dismissiveness firsthand. When interviewing a student participant, the park secretaries sat next to our table and began to have lunch with a slow trickle of arriving maintenance workers. I overheard one secretary say, "It was the Fourth of July at my house too and I still cut my grass. My lawn is ten times the size of their tiny lots, but no they cannot even cut their grass." Upon packing up to move the interview to a more private location, I noticed the park manager and his

assistant looking at a street map of Waldenburg Acres. They were deciding which streets to shut the water off for that day. I overheard the conversation, which was an exercise of power and control in the hands of the park management, “We can’t do that street we did that last time.”

Adult participants brought up the water shut offs and referenced them as a major life interruption that they were powerless to influence. Residents accepted that there were times when their water will be shut off. They knew it was useless to call the park office because they were always given the same explanation. They were told the water shuts offs were an action taken by the city and Waldenburg Acres had nothing to do with shutting off their water.

The Stevens family, admitting there was truth to both sides of complaints by residents, were willing to overlook the frustrations because living in Waldenburg Acres allowed them a leisure lifestyle and a chance to accumulate savings. For others living in Waldenburg Acres, actions like the water shut offs, hiding the corporate contact information, and the arbitrary nature of enforcement of park rules were conditions they had come to accept as “normal trailer park” irritations. The difference might be that within these less than desirable living conditions, one family ended up ahead of the game financially while others were in a continual state of playing “catch-up” financially. Questions of the relationship between the powerlessness residents of Waldenburg Acres felt and how that might influence their involvement levels at Kearney existed.

The leisure activities of the Stevens family included social gatherings with their church friends, and their love of travel. They owned a motor home that they frequently loaded up and used to travel throughout the United States. The Stevens family was a definite standout among the other research participants. Vacations for other participants in this study were limited to visiting out of town relatives, an occasional day trip to an amusement park, or an overnight stay at a water park in Northern Michigan. Sheila’s teaching schedule made calendar matches for travel with her son

and husband easier than a family with adults working year-round. Rather than visiting amusement parks, the Stevens family enjoyed both long journeys and weekend getaways at state parks closer to home. What might have made preparations for travel taxing were the multiple health concerns that Shelia lived with, which created an added layer of complexity to her relationship with David, an only child. Sheila had several chronic conditions and other complications with “organs not working right.” She wrestled with knowing even though David understood when she was tired, she understood that adolescents need their parents even if they behave as if they have everything under control.

David’s most pressing quality, that tended to cause extreme family stress, was his total rejection of any attempts at parental management of his time in support of completing his schoolwork. His strong rejection was viewed by both of his parents as being overly stubborn, but they hinted concern about David’s mental health. To get David to complete his assignments and projects his parents had to meet him on his terms to avoid conflict and tense discord between them. David described, and his parent concurred, the only consequence that caused him to produce what was expected of him in school was when he lost all of his “screens.” When David had missing assignments, or had a grade of a C or lower in a class, all of his electronics were taken from him. At first, I viewed David’s strong will as normal adolescent angst in the context of David carving out an identity independent from the monitoring of his parents. After having David sit in the study skills class I supervise for nearly 15 weeks and having experienced for myself his tenacity in relation to any remote hint that he complete assignments, I realized what his parents had hinted at all along. Their most pressing worry was not the stigma with which David lived from being a trailer park kid at Kearney; rather it was the prospect of the unknown. David was a foster child of friends of Mr. and Mrs. Stevens when he was an infant. When he was still very young, he was

placed with Sheila and Dustin and they adopted him. A handful of adolescents that I have worked with over the past seven years have demonstrated similar resistant traits, but with David the resistance was extreme. His parents had him in counseling and they were seeking other medical interventions to bring him closer to rational in accepting the role of parents in his life.

If the goal was to have David achieve in school, the taking away of screens appeared to work. Eventually, he tired of not being able to engage in his screen time habit and submitted to getting himself caught up in school. The pattern of procrastination towards schoolwork was predictable in David's life, but procrastination was not unique to David. Five of the eight student participants procrastinated and knowingly created major hindrances to timely school success. Each participant shared different reasons behind their avoidance of staying current in their assignments, projects and studying. Likewise, parents demonstrated different attitudes toward management of the procrastination habits of their children. Despite the conflict with which the Stevens family lived when trying to manage David's academic behaviors, he achieved in school. He earned As and Bs, without much effort. When I asked what was the attraction for many adolescents who preferred activities that involved a screen, he replied:

I guess it's just something to do in the meantime. I don't know why it's such an addicting thing, but it's, it's like you want to play video games because you want to get farther and farther into the game.

David was not alone in his self-described addiction to video games and other screen time activities. All four of the male student participants had video game habits that caused detrimental interruptions in schoolwork, compromised the harmony of familial relationships, and seriously impeded upon sleep patterns. Only one male participant, John Worshum, kept his video game habit balanced during the school year. By contrast, two of the four female student participants played

video games, but not to the extent that it took the place of interacting with family members or their completion of their schoolwork.

Much of the screen time for David and other trailer park kids could be viewed as an after school extracurricular activity. While other students at Kearney were involved in more traditional extracurricular events, most participants in this study had limited available extracurricular activities to which they could belong. Unplanned, natural play activities were compromised for Waldenburg Acres youth when all adult participants in this research were selective about who their child can spend leisure time with among the 79 middle school aged children living in Waldenburg Acres. If the pool of available friends and extracurricular activities were both limited, video gaming and other screen related activities, like watching YouTube non-stop, became the default extracurricular afternoon and nightly events for many trailer park kids.

For David, extracurricular activities included walking around the trailer park after school with an 8th grade girl who he had befriended. He played at the basketball court with other boys, but he had never been on a basketball team. The trailer park kids were at a severe disadvantage when trying to become members of school sponsored sports unless it was a sport where everyone made the team, like track and field. This added to the isolation they experienced in the halls and classrooms of Kearney, and exacerbated feelings of wanting to belong to something that extended their identity beyond being known solely as a trailer park kid.

David had a soft spot for students living in Waldenburg Acres that were not as economically fortunate as he was or that had challenging home situations. The 8th grade girl that frequently called on him to walk the park did so because she did not want to go home. David was aware of her difficulties at home and spent time listening to her and talking about the normal things teenagers might talk about. Despite his propensity to push back at adult guidance, he was an

empathetic soul. David was wise in that he discriminated between situations that were okay for him to be in and those that were not. When his peers from the neighborhood pushed the boundaries between what he considered proper or improper behavior, he went home.

Disturbing to David was his awareness that many members of the larger Larimer Heights community perceived the youth that lived in the trailer park as being *bad* people. Viewing all the trailer park kids as the same was a norm for those living on the outside. The trailer park kids recognized this as an irritant they did their best to ignore. David shared his take on the matter in the following way:

Like people don't understand that people from the park are usually pretty good. people don't like, and I've talked to my parents about this before, and my parent's said it's because their parents have taught them bad things that's what they've taught them and that's what their perspective is.

David's understanding was the outside negative perception was unfair, unfounded, and perpetuated by parents who teach their children the trailer park kids are the undesirables of the community. When wrestling with this outside perception, David was prone to accept the support of his parents. Dustin and Sheila were hopeful for a shift in perception and acceptance of their son by students living outside of the trailer park. They saw value in raising their son in a manufactured home community. Sheila believed that being raised among people who were not as fortunate, taught David empathy. She frequently told him to keep being himself and people will know he was a good person.

Where parental advice went awry was in the false hope others will see the error in their ways concerning their negative perception of the trailer park kids. The theme of a collective outside negative perception towards the people of Waldenburg Acres surfaced repeatedly in this research. David attempted to help me understand what it felt like to have individual identity count for nothing because he lived in a trailer park:

Exactly what happens, like there might be like two people from the park that are doing bad things all the time, getting into trouble at school, don't do homework, don't care about school and then there's the rest of us that are completely fine, just act like everybody else in the school, and then they're like, you're all bad.

When noting the exemplary students of Waldenburg Acres, the reverse was never true. People did not assume that all students from the trailer park were exemplary students because two of them might be achieving high marks, be involved in leadership roles at school, and be enrolled in advanced placement classes. In place of a collective perception that was positive about the youth from Waldenburg Acres was shock and amazement that a student from the trailer park emulated behaviors seen from some of the single-family home kids.

The acknowledgement of widely circulated negative media stigma about trailer parks was painful for kids growing up in Waldenburg Acres. They knew what was being portrayed in the media was not their reality. Because such portrayals held anonymity, the trailer park kids felt more pain from the direct assault on their identity during personal encounters. Sheila shared two stinging incidents involving David that were initially responsible for her wanting to participate in this study.

In the first incident, Shelia referred to David's treatment by another as discrimination:

Um...David has been discriminated against already. Um...I mean it's kind of funny, but it's really not because it's a back handed insult. Last year at Mason some kid had said to him, "I like your shirt. You don't dress like you come from the park." And I'm like, I told David I said, "That's a kind of a back handed insult like you know, like everybody that lives in the park, like, I'm glad he liked your shirt, but you know it's not the nicest way to give somebody a compliment."

Stating this incident was kind of funny was a sentiment evident throughout Shelia's interpretation of the perception of others about her choice to live in a manufactured home community. She used sarcasm and laughter when imitating others' thinking of her as living in the "hood" as she joking referred to it. Shelia's awareness of the perceptions of others crossed lines for her both personally and professionally. In the rural Head Start preschool of which she was the director, she noted that

the stigma of living in a manufactured home, knew no boundaries. For example, in the rural community where she worked, living in the local trailer park was worse than living in the country, even when the economic circumstance of the families mirrored one another. In comparing her work situation with her personal life, Sheila pondered out loud if the trailer park stigma was worse in Larimer Heights because of the relative wealth of the surrounding community:

I had kind of wondered because this area is so wealthy, if that's a real extra stigma to us here because we kind of live like the ghetto in comparison to the million dollar houses, you know, right down the road. But in ---, I have a lot of clientele in the park. It's no different from a parent that lives in the country in--- is going to look the same way at the people who live in the trailer park, like it's not just here. I hear it from parents there, too.

This dual-role provided Sheila with her unique perspective and her ability to poke fun at the misinterpretations others had about living in manufactured homes. Whether living in a trailer park located in a suburban area, or living in a trailer park out in the country, Sheila maintained that the misinterpretation of lives, marginalization, and negative stigma remained the same.

The second incident involved a direct affront on David's character, retold by Sheila as having occurred during the past school year, when David was in the 6th grade at Kearney:

This year was the one about um...um...all the bad kids come from the park and David's like, you know he talked about it with me later, but I don't know if he said anything at the time. You know, he said, "I'm not a bad kid. I don't have a mean (inaudible)" and I said, "You'll just have to keep being yourself and you'll prove him wrong. They'll know who you are."

The poignancy of the trailer park kids always having to prove themselves to others, that they are good people, that they wanted the same things in life as the single-family home kids seemed to escape most people at Kearney. The exhaustive efforts extended by the trailer park kids to hide where they lived while at school, also escaped some of the trailer park kids, as in the case of David. He was content with his small circle of friends that lived in the trailer park and cared not whether he added to his friendship group. Sheila described his selection of friends, "He's finding since

middle school, I think he's sticking with these kids here. I think he's more comfortable with the ones in here." Similar in measure was David's pride in where he lived. He did not avoid naming his home community at school in situations where it was a natural flow of the conversation.

Although they did not appreciate having to live under the negative stigma, both Shelia and Dustin adhered to the assessment of the community of Larimer Heights towards Waldenburg Acres:

Sheila: We've seen a few kids around here not behave. There's a few. There's a little bit of truth on both sides.

Dustin: There's, we watch kids and it's like where's your parents? You see them out at night when I'm out with my dog near 9:00. Here comes this child walking out of the woods. He's I don't know, how old is the neighbor child down there?

Sheila: David's age.

Dustin: David's age, but yet it's, it's 8:30, 9:00 and I'm thinking where is your parent in all of this?

Sheila: Well, it's the condo people always in the Acres. [Referring to the luxury apartments nearby.]

Dustin: Yeah, yeah, but it's non-parenting going on and so that's probably where some of that is.

Sheila: I can see it from both angles. I'm just going to be really honest with you.

Dustin placed blame for the negative perception of Waldenburg Acres on a lack of parenting and unsupervised youth. This blame placing did not indicate that Dustin felt the trailer park kids were all attracted to participation in socially risky behaviors as was believed by those living outside of Waldenburg Acres. Sheila was more apt to witness deviant behaviors because she was home a significantly larger amount of time than her husband. Sheila understood where the perception came from, but like her son, she pushed back at the indiscriminate nature with which the residents of the city viewed all residents of the Waldenburg Acres community the same.

7th Graders

Like the 6th graders, the 7th grade participants were intentionally selected as in one female and one male participant. At the time of this study, John Worshum was a 7th grade African American male living in Waldenburg Acres. Denise Worshum was eager to participate, but her eagerness was not shared by her son. Although extremely polite, John was not as forthcoming as his mother during our interview sessions. Perhaps he felt as if everything had already been discussed because he was present during Denise's interview sessions with me. I was not allowed in the Worshum's home due to a recent quarantine connected to a health concern of Denise's mother, whom they lived with.

The female 7th grade participants first selected for this study were students I had worked with this past year in my Learning Consultant role at Kearney. Both families considered participating, but in the end one family declined due to a busy spring schedule and the other due to disagreement as to whether participating was a good idea. Another participant, Mrs. Knight, recommended I contact the mother of Isla Sanchez because she felt that both mother and daughter would be willing to speak with me. Along with Denise and John, Shari and Isla were the second family that was interviewed in a location outside their home.

John Worshum.

I went to the choir concert. I felt like a sore thumb, like I stuck out like a sore thumb. People are staring at me and I'm just like my child is in the choir. You know what I mean? And just things like I only seen one other African American child up there. So, it's kind of like, I don't know I guess if you don't have to live it every day. It's kind of an, an uneasy feeling when you just think the spotlight is just directed on you. It's like, "Are you in the right place? Did you get lost?" You know and you have to say, "My child is in the choir." It bothers me the same as the economic thing.

(Denise Worshum, personal interview, 4/19/2017)

Twenty-one African American students were enrolled at Kearney during the 2016-2017 school year. The *other* African American child in the choir noted above was a friend of John. He was the adopted son of White parents. Being that the *other* child's father was a surgeon and his mother was a lawyer, the social groups by race at Kearney disregarded the wealth status of the families as criteria for group membership. The above quote demonstrated marginalization felt by Denise Worshum when she attended school functions like the 7th and 8th Grade Boys Spring Choir Concert. However, the marginalizing conditions surrounding a school event are not contained on the school grounds. Ms. Worshum felt marginalized living in Waldenburg Acres, but her feelings were not shared by her son, John.

The Worshum family ended up living in Waldenburg Acres when John was in the third grade. Having had to move from a neighboring city where Denise grew up, she frequently referenced the lack of diversity in comparison to their old neighborhood and schools:

I just feel like the lack of diversity in the park is, it's disheartening to me. Just, I mean I grew up in --- and it was not a lot of diversity, but way more than out in Larimer Heights. So, I just feel like having a small child here, it has no diversity and it's just like I feel we're looked at as if like, "What are you doing here?" If that makes sense. Like the neighbors on our right and on our left, are very sweet, they're elderly though, so they're very sweet, very nice. But when, you know, you're driving down the road, or you're, I'm walking my dog, people give me like this stare as if like "Well what are you doing here? Do you live here?"

The sense of being an intruder in the Waldenburg Acres community weighed heavily on Denise. This was not how her life was supposed to play out. Earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan after high school, Denise was often internally conflicted about how she ended up living in Waldenburg Acres. Her response to my question about internal conflict with her current residential status resulted in the following narrative:

When you have the best of the best and that kind of like feels like look at your circumstance now, type deal, if that makes sense. Look what happened now. We went from here to here. I'm not saying that it's a bad neighborhood...it's the

perception that people who live in the trailer homes you know so you have no education or lousy education, or you don't have a good job, you're barely making it so this is all you can afford and so this is, this is just your life. So, I feel like the people that live in there couldn't amount to anything, you know, better so, it's just nuts, for lack of a better word, but more so just above poor, if I can say so. You're not at the poverty level, but you're like one check away from living in government houses or something or whatever and so people look at it like oh, that's where you live, you're in the trailer park...you're looked down upon, in my opinion.

Her frustrations were grounded in logistics of life circumstance, coupled with a lack of acceptance that she felt as a resident in both Waldenburg Acres and Larimer Heights. Denise understood her higher education credentials and her background as what might have separated her from other residents of Waldenburg Acres, who she assumed may be *lifers* in trailer park living.

Bothered by the negative perceptions outsiders had and the marginalized treatment inside the Waldenburg Acres community, Denise admitted that she was guilty of levying similar negative judgments on others:

And, and I find myself doing the same thing to them. I'll drive down the road and I'm like you have your blinds all broken and you have sheets on the windows and you know maybe they can't afford to do anything, but that's what they have for right now. But I find myself saying that's an eyesore. You have your couch in the middle of your grass and you park your car up on the grass. You have a broken-down car in your driveway. But if you can't do anything better then you have to do with what you have. So, I find myself I'm guilty of it as well. That, I've tried to mind that, but I mean so I understand how it happens and how they do it. But it's just I feel like um, my I'm really worried on my end because it seems like everyone in the first six block, six house radius, they struggle, all of their houses they struggle and their blinds are all broken and their cars, you know, not new or what not so they can relate. But they can't relate to me at all, so for me I'm like this is your norm, I don't live like this. You know their yards are all trash and things laying everywhere and no upkeep, it's just horrible [Laughs]. So, like I said it could be, you know, a number of things. But you know and then when I, the young lady when I lived directly across the street, she has five kids and the kids are always running around in the street and they're loud and I'm just thinking to myself she doesn't work. What is she on assistance, or you know, what's going on? And I, I mean I'm guilty of it too, you know. Like, um, like I said, it's just perception. And she could be the nicest young lady ever. I don't, I don't know her story.

Viewing her surroundings in a less than favorable light was not a lone avenue for Denise. All parent participants wrestled with their surroundings in one way, shape or form. Denise recognized in herself that she was guilty of the same thought patterns and behaviors of others that she fell victim to. She laughed about it while engaging in her own self-analysis, almost as if to say, “I can’t believe I’m living here. So rather than cry about it, I’ll laugh about it.” Laughter was a common trait among my parent participants when discussion turned towards an explanation of what life was like as a resident of Waldenburg Acres.

A little over four years ago, Denise and John moved into Waldenburg Acres with John’s maternal grandmother who, recently diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, needed caregiving. The move was supposed to be temporary, until Denise’s mother returned to full health after her chemotherapy treatments, stem cell replacement, and the quarantine she was under lifted. During this time, other circumstances began to add up making it impossible for Denise and John to move. First there was a four-month stint of unemployment for Denise after losing her position of over 13 years in the banking industry. Then began the steady arrival of medical bills for her mother’s care. Eventually, Denise was re-employed in the financial industry at a brokerage firm. She had a 45-minute drive to and from work which placed additional stress on her, but also created opportunities for John to build independence in carrying out his responsibilities as a student and son to a single-parent.

According to John, the only disadvantage to living in Waldenburg Acres was that, “the houses are small.” He appreciated that the neighborhood was close together because he could get around to his friend’s houses faster. John was clear to let me know that his neighborhood was big and it was the closeness of knowing where everything was and where all his friends lived that made it seem small. Both the proximity of the homes and the enclosed nature of the trailer park

provided a certain feeling of belonging and familiarity for students in knowing that this expanse of manufactured homes was the spatial limit of their neighborhood. The boundaries provided freedom for the adolescents living there since when “hanging out” most of them went wherever they wanted inside the park, with friends allowed by their parent(s).

When asked about what he thought about his neighborhood, John replied, “It’s nice. Somethings happen around you that (pause) people call the cops on other people. People will argue and fight in the street. I seen it a couple of times.” When I asked him what they argued and fought about he said, “I don’t know I never stop to ask.” Most of John’s comments about the trailer park could be viewed as favorable, despite his observations of a police presence to mitigate disputes between residents. An asymmetrical relationship existed between student participant’s ideas about living in the trailer park and their parent’s ideas about the same. For example, coupled with the lack of diversity mentioned prior, Denise shared that she felt targeted by residents of the trailer park due to the type of car she drives, a BMW. For student participants, the more expensive their clothing the more they were looked up to by their peers. But for parent participants like Denise, an expensive car caused her to suffer an alienated existence. This contrarian relationship between the high neighborhood popularity of the students from Waldenburg Acres who sometimes dressed as the single-family home students did and the adults residents who have expensive cars being alienated by others reflected differences in criteria for acceptance between adults and children.

An encounter between Denise’s mother and a maintenance worker set the tone for the difference in understanding between mother and son of the neighborhood in which they reside:

By the time she got home she was calling me on the phone and she said, “You know he was really nasty to me and yelled and talking why do we live here and knows exactly where I live and what cars that are in my driveway and so on and so forth.” And so, I became upset and you know irate because that’s my vehicle. I work hard every single day. I have a college degree and I make decent money so where I can afford my vehicle. You don’t know what my circumstance is or what happened to

why I had to move over here so that doesn't mean, you know, I have a BMW so I shouldn't be allowed to live over here. You know what I mean? And so, it was just kind of like what does that have to do with anything. What does the vehicle that you drive have to do with the place where you live and being treated fairly and we pay rent every month just like everyone else. What if we didn't have a car in my driveway at all? Are you still going to mistreat us? We pay lot rent like everyone else and so I was like on my way. I like, I'm on my way up there and my Mom was like no, no, no, you know. What if they, you know, start to target us and mess with our vehicle, or do something to our yard, or anything you know? But I felt so angry because you don't know what my life story is. I haven't lived there all my life. You don't know what happened. So how dare you insinuate that I don't belong there or we shouldn't live there because of the type of vehicle that we drive.

This encounter was on a Saturday. An apology note to Denise's mother was placed in their mailbox on Sunday. The timing of the apology caused suspicion in Denise that perhaps this employee did not want to face possible repercussions if Denise reported the incident. Denise's mother also feared repercussions if they had reported the incident. This incidence was indicative of the various adult social tensions evident in Waldenburg Acres; namely, suspicion, mistrust, and fear. In attempting to decipher whether the treatment she received from residents and park management was more about her BMW than race she responded:

The thing is you don't want to play the race card per say. You don't want to say it's all because of our race being African American...it's not a sense of welcoming or friendliness...like I said, it's just their perception of me and I think it's a lack of knowing. Where did she come from with this vehicle? And she's dressed like that, and everything. What does she do? And I think it's the fear of them not knowing who I am and their perception that gives them that standoffish attitude.

Denise described herself as having a strong sense of who she is. Targeting stares and social distance were irritants that kept her focused on moving from Larimer Heights before John reached his high school years:

Whenever I walk around everyone stares like what are you doing over here? As if I don't live in the park. And I get the same you know glare, or whatever, when I'm walking my dog. But, I try to keep it in a block radius, you know I go one block over a few times so I'm more comfortable, I'm closer to home. I just go on the outside and I come right back, but I don't venture out.

She kept similar limits as her self-protective walking routes on the homes in the neighborhood that John could visit. Denise counted three homes in Waldenburg Acres that John had permission to go to. She felt comfortable with this group of John's friends because she knew the parents and viewed them as nice. Other than the parents of John's three friends and her direct neighbors on each side of her home, Denise felt unwelcomed in the trailer park. She admitted that John had adjusted well to living in the trailer park and attending Kearney Middle School. Out of all my participant families, the distance between the experience and perception of Denise and that of John held the largest span. This complicated the identify formation possibilities for John since he did realize the inconsistencies in his experience as opposed to his mothers.

During this past school year John did not spend that much time outside with friends since he was on both the football and track teams. He was self-sufficient as far as getting his homework completed and studying for tests and quizzes. When John was younger, Denise played a more active role in ensuring his academic success. Now that he was older, she continued to set the tone for his academic success by close monitoring of his assignments and achievement, but did not insert herself like she did during his earlier years. She recounted completing projects with John and going to his elementary school parent teacher conferences. Denise does not attend parent teacher conferences anymore. She felt that the A and B report card grades John earned were enough guide for her, although she preferred John achieve all As. Denise knew John was capable of earning all As since he had done it before. Denise was content with the consistency in route parental notifications sent out as the communication practice of the teachers at Kearney Middle School. She would appreciate personal communication from John's teachers now and then to let her know specifically how her child was doing in class. At Kearney, detailed automatic emails were sent to parents when students had grades below a C- so that expected home intervention could occur to

move the student from possibly failing to passing. Likewise, many teachers sent home daily text messages relaying the night's homework and information about upcoming tests and projects. Denise appreciated this communication, but found it a bit sterile and yearned for a more personable approach from the school in reference to her son.

On the note of what Kearney Middle School could do to better service the residents of Waldenburg Acres, Denise responded how difficult it was for single parents to get their kids to and from activities after school:

You know I feel like the most disheartening thing is that all the after school activities take place at like 4:00. Um, you know my son wants to play football. Practice ends at 3:30-4:00...for the working parent, we all work a nine to five job. How can we support our children if we're not, if you start a game by 4:30? By the time I get there the game is over. You know, so that's my biggest gripe. I fuss about it all the time because I just feel like that they're not listening. I do. I think that being next to the high school, it almost seems like most of the parents are affluent and they stay at home Moms so they don't have to worry about that. Well, what about the rest of us that like to support our children?

She suggested transportation home from activities, clubs and sports events so that more students could participate in such opportunities. Denise arrived home from work at 6 or 6:30, a time frame that was well beyond release time of after school events. When John played football last fall, she had to rely on his Godparents to pick him up at school and drive him home. Denise felt the added burden of economic disparity between her home life and the single-family home residents. She perceived the single-family home parents as advantaged by being available for their children to participate in after school activities.

John was extremely quiet during our time together. He did not engage in extended answers to my questions like his mother did. One key aspect of John's personality was his awareness that when he left his home he represented his mother. This was presented to me in the form of a question posed to John by Denise that appeared to be a familiar mother and son routine:

Denise: When you leave the house what does that mean? Who do you represent?

John: You.

Denise: Okay so then you know how to behave. So, I think that's just been our motto since we've structured that from the beginning and never deviated from it and we haven't had any issues and something's working.

Even though Denise had stepped back with John's academics, she practiced a tight parenting style with John in most other areas.

John's one word response when asked to describe himself was "quiet." John was quiet with adults, but his behavior in school with his friends was anything but quiet. John and two of his friends could frequently be seen running down the hallways as the first students out of the lunchroom. They obliged adult requests to *slow down* or *please walk* to the point of a fast walk. When asked what quality he possessed that he was most proud of John responded, "My running ability." Even though *quiet* was my experience with John, I pushed back at his use of this word to describe himself. The common behaviors that contribute to a personal descriptor of *quiet* was not a match to my field observations of John. "No, but I am quiet when I am around new people," was his response.

When naming his friends, John led me through the names of six different boys in the 7th grade. Of this number, two are White, one is Mexican-American, and three are African American. John's listed friends outside of the trailer park were African American males. Two members of the latter group are his running from lunch partners. Unlike other trailer park kids, John had good friends both inside and outside of the trailer park. He "sometimes" went over the homes of his friends that do not live in Waldenburg Acres, but not frequently. According to Denise, to reciprocate by having friends that do not live in Waldenburg Acres spend time at John's house was

out of the question. When I shared that some of my student participants hide where they live, I outwardly pondered if she was similarly private. The following exchange ensued:

Denise: John got invited to a birthday party and it was one of the homes that were off like second or third, like downtown Larimer, you know, nice homes. And I dropped him off and I'm pulling up and I'm like [inaudible] and the home was very nice, you know, and I was thinking like, great, but you know everyone who was dropping their children off, you know, they had nice vehicles and I'm like okay I didn't feel too out of place, but I can relate like because I don't have his friends from the other neighborhoods over ever.

Me: Ever?

Denise: Ever.

Me: But no one ever comes over and that's because...

Denise: Well, at one point it was because my mom and the quarantine, you know. We couldn't have you know, outsiders in. But then at the same time it's almost like ugg, you know people they come over and they're like is it a trailer? You know type deal.

This restriction did not apply to the few friends that John had in the trailer park. His trailer park friends were free to come over and spend time with John inside of his home. One of John's neighborhood friends was required by Denise to bring his homework with him due to his quick arrival after school and his claim to not have any homework. In this way, Denise was supportive of other people's children in the community even if the larger sentiment towards her presence there was unwelcoming.

John managed his own time after school and Denise could count on him to stay current in his studies. She trusted that her son would meet her expectations for him. Denise was both encouraging and supportive of her son's growing independence and his ability to compete with the single-family home students for spots on the honor roll. Denise appreciated that the assessment goals for special projects could usually be found on-line for her own knowledge of John's progress

on project completion. John had a strong and organized work ethic. In speaking of John's independent work habits Denise exclaimed:

Actually, he is very self-sufficient. He's very good. I'm so glad. Usually when I'm home I'm wiped out from work and he completes his homework with very minimal help and he's an A and B student. I mean he's very good at mapping out his work.

On the rare occasion when John was unsure of an assignment at home, or needed clarification on a pending due date, Denise reported that she did not have a mom network to rely upon for answers. She and John sort out the occasional school assignment confusion without the support of a community or close friend. Lack of a *mom network* was true of every parent participant.

Conflict between mother and son was evident when it came to discussing the high school that John should attend. Denise had her sights on sending John to the high school that was the most diverse of the three high schools in Larimer Heights. During the interview, John shared that he wanted to stay at his assigned high school so that he could play sports there. Even though John said that he would not officially refer to himself as popular he admitted that he believed this to be true. With popular being his perception of himself, it was no wonder John pushed back at Denise's desire to have him attend a high school other than the one his Kearney friends will attend. Denise thought the centrally located high school would be better for John since the students that attended there were not as economically privileged as the students at his assigned high school:

I have said to myself that I have to move out of this district because I don't want John to go to ---. I don't want him to go to --- because you're going to be in the mixture of all those hot to toddies and I don't want him to feel like if I can't keep up with what they have going on, that you know, he'll feel a certain way and I don't want that. Just because, you know, it seems that the students and the parents that attend --- are more, you know, from the affluent background and I feel like if I can't keep up or provide the same luxuries to my child that he'll be treated differently and I would rather for him to go to--- High School or, because, you know, everyone is working to try to maintain a certain lifestyle and then we're all on common ground. Not saying that there aren't affluent children that go there but it's not just known for that. You know --- is known for, "Well I go to ---" and it has a, you

know, when you say that it's like oh, you live on that side of Larimer Heights. There's a difference so...

Denise challenged the reported excellence of the Larimer Heights School District. She would like to move from the city altogether. She shared that she thought the neighboring city, where she grew up, was a much better school district. She liked that it had a more diverse student body. The school district Denise preferred had been suffering from declining enrollment for the past decade precisely because of the diversity of the student body. Middle-class White families are fleeing this district because of the influx of African American families. If Denise had her way, John would not be attending Larimer Heights Schools and they would not be living in Waldenburg Acres. Being that John was aware of his mother's discontent with the schools and community, he knew that his best shot of staying there was by never disappointing her by earning grades below a B.

Isla Sanchez.

People think that people who live in trailer parks are like dumb in life or they're just lazy and they don't make a lot of money.

(Isla Sanchez, personal interview, 7/6/2017)

Out of all the student participants I have come to know while conducting this research, Isla Sanchez was most able to remove herself from the usual pressures of being a trailer park kid at Kearney Middle School. Isla was not interested in border crossing by being accepted for her clothing or other material goods; rather she was deliberate in carving out her identity as one who could acquire similar academic success as the single-family home students without yearning to become one of them. By breaking down the hidden barriers of who had power in school, Isla stuck me as someone who may be forming a critical consciousness as a future social justice advocate. Isla took comfort in her self-described outspokenness, which surfaced in spaces like her 7th grade world studies class, at home, and during interview sessions. She was frequently candid in her

attacks on social conservative agendas and according to her mother she seemed to enjoy debating social issues with her parents and in her world studies class. Her calm and informed voice was frequently laced with laughter at what she viewed as the *stupidity* of it all. Her self-reported outspokenness might have developed through the reactions of others when she shared her socially progressive beliefs with a student body that was demographically a classic fit for socially conservative beliefs. Isla was a staunch rule follower both inside and outside of school. By use of traditional channels, like rule following behaviors, Isla had access to positioning in school amid the single-family home students who were high achieving and had economic affluence. Even though Isla had procured a high position in school through following rules and academic success, she rejected membership in all groups. Isla preferred to experience the school day as isolated as possible.

Isla paid close attention to language that promoted labels with negative connotations. The quote that started this section was Isla's brief explanation of what she viewed as stereotyping with the use of the words, *trailer park*. The three attributes mentioned by Isla: dumb, lazy and not making a lot of money, are themes that Isla purposely worked to disrupt. Although she did not balk at the use of the term *trailer park*, sharing with pride that it was her preferred term for her neighborhood, she did object to the *general sense* that others have about trailer parks and stated, "it's just the stereo-typing around it that bothers me." When I asked Isla if she had ever heard the term *trailer trash* at school like other participants she responded in this way:

Trailer trash. I hate that word. Trailer trash. Basically, to me trailer trash is that you're trashy or you're stupid, things like that. You're just not a good person to be around. I hate that word so much...I don't really hear it though and if I would hear it I would say something. I don't tell the kids where I live because it's not relevant. I don't really tell people.

Isla noted more than once that there was a difference between being bothered by words and being bothered by the context associated with words. Her analytical focus on language occurred four more times during our interviews. Once, when asked to share perceptions about the fairness of student treatment from classroom teachers she objected to my use of the term *teacher's pet* by commenting, "I don't think teachers have pets and I think that terms kind of weird, it's not necessary." A second time, when asked about the use of the terms *gay* and *faggot*, Isla launched into a defense of the use of the words by You Tubers she watched, depending upon the context in which the words are used:

Oh, that's so, here's the thing. I watch You Tubers who say those terms in a funny way. They're not doing it in a cruel way to make fun of it, they're just a comic relief type of thing and I'm fine with that. I think that's okay if you're just not actually making fun of that, but there's sometimes when it's just, come on, that's disrespectful. So, it's the context that it's used in.

A meaningful piece of Isla's identity was synthesized by what appeared to be her constant scrutiny of the intended meanings of the words and actions of others. It was almost as if she was constantly in an evaluative mode, playing around with securing what she was learning about the world and her place in it. For example, in our first interview together Isla established herself as a young person who was removed from the larger community of Larimer Heights, liked being alone, and liked living in a trailer park by responding to my inquiry about the aspects of her community that she liked in the following way:

Well, I like how I don't really know my community cause I like to be alone. But, if you're talking about where I live then, I like it cause it's pretty, it's small, it's nice, it's just really nice to live there.

The understanding that Waldenburg Acres was part of the larger community that she was unfamiliar with substantiated the insular lives of the residents of Waldenburg Acres. Similar to Isla, most of the participants spoke of their neighborhood as if it was a *thing* rather than a place of

community. In Isla's case, she spoke of how it was "nice to live there" when at the time, we were sitting in the clubhouse. With our location in mind, the use of "nice to live there" instead of "nice to live here" substantiated further the confusing mix of to what degree Waldenburg Acres was an accepting and welcoming community.

The language in use by not only Isla, but most of my participants, was overly attentive to what I spoke of in chapter one as the invisible barrier between Waldenburg Acres Manufactured Home Community and Larimer Heights. The *inside/outside* or *in here/out there* word choice occupied a prominent place in numerous interviews with parent and student participants. This language was included in Isla's contemplation about why living in Waldenburg Acres did not rob her of possible friendships as had occurred with other research participants:

You know that doesn't happen to me because I don't really hang out with people, but I have seen girls say they wouldn't feel safe coming to a trailer park...Yeah, someone said that before and I overheard it. I think people might think that trailer parks are scary or like poor, things like that. It's what they associate it with sometimes. It's not true. I don't feel in danger here. I feel safer here than out there.

Despite her recognition of the stigma under which her community lived, her preference for being alone, and her contentment with living in Waldenburg Acres, Isla was discontented with the students and the parent community at Kearney. Her reasons for this discontent vary from the issue of student censorship, to rejection of popular culture:

The modern world is lacking intelligence, because we don't really worry that much about history or learning, they worry about when this person is going to release a new song or a new [clothing] line or something.

Taken in isolation this statement by Isla may be viewed as somewhat of a performance. But, given her repeated reference to the modern world during our time together, her calm and unwavering demeanor, and her obvious T-shirts sporting musicians from decades ago (1970s and 1980s rock, 1980s and 1990s hip-hop), there was no doubt that Isla was true to form in representation of herself

as separate from the modern world. When we first met, she showed up in a Tupac T-shirt explaining to me that, “I like music from both sides. I like Tupac, Ice Cube, Easy and Biggie. I like their music because they’re so outspoken about things.” Her attachment to music centered on choices of musicians who at one time were viewed as controversial by mainstream Americans and revolutionary by others. For example, she included The Beatles, Pink Floyd and David Bowie as some of her rock favorites.

Isla attached her observations of the students at Kearney to her belief they are uninformed and censored by their parents and for this she was angry. Consider this exchange during our first interview session together:

Isla: I hate censorship. I’m pretty outspoken about how much I don’t like Trump. I definitely don’t agree with him trying to shut the media up. He kinda reminds me of, in some ways, Hitler, in some ways. Hitler tried to do that. There is also a lot of kids in our school who are fully supporting Trump.

Me: How do you deal with that?

Isla: It makes me pretty mad, it really does because they don’t really know the full story of it. With my Mom and Dad, they don’t care what I watch or what I see. They just, like I’ve seen everything on the news. I know everything that’s going on and it makes me mad. It makes me kind of mad that their parents, they’re not showing them what’s actually happening.

This emotional response by Isla held possibilities of extremes. First, it could be understood as her perception of herself being rightly informed; whereas she viewed other students her age as being misinformed. Another possibility was that Isla was developing an engagement with the world that traveled far beyond her peers’ obsession with what outfit to wear to school the next day. Isla was agitated by the parental censorship that she believed was happening in the homes of her peers in Larimer Heights. First and foremost, this was a human rights issue with Isla and secondly an issue of her disagreement with the perspectives of others.

Along with her development of a critical consciousness, Isla was also developing a rather sophisticated class-consciousness, connected to her experience of attending school with students from economic means significantly more affluent than her family. According to her mother, Isla did not like rich people. The following extended exchange is shared with intention of noticing the differentiation at work in Isla's mind that ranged from the focus of the Republican Party as being "financial" to the focus of her peers as being too modern and thus, superficial:

Isla: I don't hate them, I don't really hate people, but I dislike a lot of people like that who are in a bubble and get everything they want.

Me: Help me to understand. Does being rich mean living in a bubble and getting everything you want?

Isla: Yeah sometimes. A lot of ah, rich people are I've noticed, they're Republicans. Since financially Republicans are more for financial than actual social issues. Yeah so, they're not concerned about social issues.

Me: Are you talking about the people that live around here, in Larimer Heights?

Isla: Yeah sometimes.

Me: How do you relate to the kids at school?

Isla: It is really difficult. I don't like the things they do like a lot of their interests are too modern and they like, in my opinion, stupid stuff like LuLu Lemon, and ah, singers today and their attitude. Taylor Swift and the people they like today.

In her efforts to resist anything and anyone connected to privilege, Isla frequently commented on social causes, or social class, and sometimes both. She attributed the finding of her voice to one teacher, her 7th grade World Studies teacher who she claimed, "stood out" by changing her to be, "A little more open about sharing my opinions and things, cause it's something I really didn't do." In her World Studies class, Isla remembered one exchange with a single-family home student that demonstrated her finding her voice about Gay Rights and social class difference in the United States. Along with her frustration about her peers' fixation on designer clothing and pop music,

she found the most powerful point of contention to be their attitudes and her recognition of the parental influence, which she appeared to view as oppressive. Isla explained:

Isla: You know about the parent community that makes me so sad. You can tell the way the kids talk that they teach their kids to be unaccepting basically about things. I heard this girl say that her Dad's a pastor [laughter] and that they think it's gross and that if she had a kid she wouldn't want that kid to be around gay people. They don't want to [makes quotation marks with her fingers] "catch the gay." It was a long time ago and I still remember it.

Me: Did you respond?

Isla: I wanted to. There was no time left. She also said things like about upper-class middle-class. She thinks that um, it was this thing that we were talking about taxes and I said I think that the upper-class should pay more taxes than the lower-classes. And her stance was that well, the upper-class, they work for their money. Lower-classes don't work for their money. That's not true at all [laughter]. That gets me, that actually kind of offended me cause my Dad, we're not upper-class, we're like middle-class, and he works his butt off at work and he comes home with like scratches from machines. He actually works. That really offended me.

Isla placed her identity in middle-class America with a strong work ethic that she was proud to have in her heritage. Isla stated that her father "actually works" which insinuated that she may hold the opposite view of the work ethic of upper-class fathers.

The rule following behaviors of Isla was connected to her resistance of all things disruptive of teaching and learning. Isla chose to leave her cell phone at home since she viewed phones as a disrespectful disruption in school. Instead of engaging in adolescent testing of boundaries, Isla injected her school day with firmer boundaries than expected by the teachers at Kearney. When asked about teacher expectations, Isla responded:

To work hard and actually try, I guess. Sometimes the kids slack off, a lot. They'll be on their phones. That really bothers me. I think kids shouldn't bring their phones to school. You don't really need it. Your parents know where you are. You're at school. You don't really need it. It isn't cool, it's disrespectful. Like I don't bring my phone to school cause I don't think I need it.

By dismissing phone use that disrupted teaching and learning, Isla could be elevating herself in status among the teachers at Kearney, positioning herself as a “pet”, a concept that she rejected. Her obedient behavior could work to overthrow the stigma that she lived with by being a trailer park kid, allowing her to be positioned among the high achievers at Kearney.

Elevated positioning for Isla would not change her preference for being alone. During her 7th grade school year at Kearney, Isla ate lunch alone. She willingly confined herself to the same singular spot amidst a sea of nearly four hundred students. Acceptance by others was not something Isla craved and what might be confusing was that she was not an outward resister. Because of her solitary existence, Isla created concern for some teachers. She was certain that she did not feel lonely and that she was not bothered by the damaging perceptions surrounding trailer park living by explaining:

Sometimes we're targeted, sometimes people have this negative idea about people who live in a trailer park. I do feel that. It doesn't bother me. I think I'm pretty good. I don't need someone else to tell me that. Someone I don't know to tell me that I'm bad or I'm not smart. I already know I'm pretty good.

The quiet confidence with which Isla moved through the school day was unlikely for most trailer park girls her age. She was driven by the will to succeed on her terms, which was precisely the quality she attributed to having a successful life. Isla's will, combined with her parents' influence, positioned her to continue upsetting low expectations others had of trailer park kids.

The manufactured home that Isla lived in with her younger sister and parents was a model from the year 1978. Four years ago, her family paid cash for their home, moving them from an apartment in a nearby city to Larimer Heights. Having lived in trailer parks for much of her life, Isla's mom, Sheri Labrowski, was content with the upkeep of Waldenburg Acres in comparison to other trailer parks in metropolitan Detroit. Sheri's earliest memories of living in a trailer park began at the age of six, when she was one member of a group of five neighborhood children in a

tight knit community where the adult residents collectively looked out for their five youngest community members. Sheri remembered being taught how to swim by the owner of the park's children who worked as lifeguards at the pool. Her draw to Waldenburg Acres was threefold: the affordability for an affluent area, the schools, and the four local choices of higher education. When her daughters finish high school, Sheri would prefer both Isla and her sister stay home for their college years because she felt it would be too hard on the family to be separated. Her biggest personal regret was not going to college herself.

Isla was well-aware of her mother's regret at not going to college and knew that her mother was determined to "push" her through college, "definitely." The clarity with which both spoke of Isla's future education appeared to be propelled by Sheri's determination to parent in a way that she was not parented. Sheri ran away at the age of 15, making it all the way to California. Shortly thereafter, she came back home to finish high school as a teenage mother. Because of her pregnancy, Sheri was placed in an alternative high school and quickly became insulted at the fifth-grade level work she was being asked to do. She fought to obtain her grade level curriculum, which she did and eventually graduated one semester behind her age level peers. Currently she works part-time in a laundromat where she gets to hear the happenings in Waldenburg Acres from residents who come there to do their laundry. She found it sad that many of her neighbors do not have washers and dryers in their homes. She often wondered about the lives of her neighbors.

Knowing that her father works hard and earns \$20.00 an hour as a machinist, Isla spoke of her father's profession in a way that assisted in interrupting the notion that working class people are lazy. She disrupted the perception of trailer park residents being poor by freely sharing that her family does not want for anything. Sheri recognized her family as having more economic stability

than most residents of Waldenburg Acres by stating that if she applied for any type of assistance she would be “laughed at.”

Isla took delight in sharing that her father had a reputation as a troublemaker, in a neighboring agrarian community, which caused him to dropout of high school. She described her father as being the “do what makes you happy” type and her mother as the one who pushed formal education. Isla’s 7th grade academic achievement was a complete break from her achievement in the 6th grade. Due to low test scores, and “checking-out” Isla was placed in two remediation classes in the 6th grade, one for reading and one for math. Isla resisted all things school throughout the 6th grade. She did not complete her assignments and did not participate in class. When Shari contacted the school to protest her daughter’s placement in a remedial reading course she was placated with explanations of the evidence from data. Shari’s testimonials of what Isla read and comprehended at home were dismissed. In the end, Shari decided to side with the school and teach Isla personal responsibility in taking school reading assessments seriously. When Isla complained to her mother that the remedial reading course was reading third grade level material, Shari’s response was, “You did it to yourself.”

Isla’s summer reading list included a volume of Shakespeare that she borrowed during a trip to the library with her mother. Her choice of Shakespeare for summer reading further separated her from her peers. Shakespeare added another notch upward and away from what she claimed to not be bothered by, her trailer park status. Isla’s ability to access literature traditionally viewed as high culture placed her in a nearly untouchable status in middle school. It was almost as if she was poking fun at her single-family home classmates for their lack of sophistication in preferring access to popular teen culture and listening to musicians like Taylor Swift, rather than reading Shakespeare. The magnitude of this important quest of Isla’s to be identified as someone who read

Shakespeare cannot be understated. In recent conversation with her 8th grade Language Arts teacher, I learned that Isla made a point to let her new Language Arts teacher know about her Shakespeare summer reading on the second day of school.

Isla's life at home was as solitary as her life at school. She spent her time doing homework, reading, watching CNN, old black and white movies, or You Tube, gaming, and listening to rock from decades ago, along with current and not so current hip-hop. Her father worried about her solitude and her interests in global affairs and social justice. According to her mother he wanted her to be more like a normal kid. Once when Isla came home complaining about the kids in the lunchroom who were throwing food and not listening to the rules, her father tried to explain to her that they were just being kids and that she should lighten up a bit. Shari had tried to circumvent Isla's intensity for rules in various ways. Once while grocery shopping, Isla became distraught when her mother switched one flavor out of a six pack of Starbucks iced cappuccinos. Using the rationale that "everybody does it" and "it's not like the police are going to come or anything" Isla could not be convinced the switching out of one beverage in a six pack was an appropriate and harmless action.

The only school rule that Isla wanted to push back at was the dress code because she viewed it as sexist:

Some of the dress code. The dress code, it's kinda, I think the dress code is kind of silly. I don't think students should have things hanging out, of course, just some, it's kind of stupid. The shoulder thing, Angela had an issue with one teacher who kept giving her dress code for like shoulders. I would pick on her for it. "You're showing your shoulders everywhere, Angela. That's disgusting." Yeah, I would pick on her [laughter]. It's just, sometimes I feel like it's kind of sexualizing students in you shouldn't show that. It's yeah, it's sexist too. It just sexualizes students, which isn't okay.

Her sophisticated understanding of the dress code in school was tempered by the humor she injected while teasing the only person she mentioned to me as having had occasionally hung out

with, Angela Knight. Isla's grievance was not that when violated, the dress code called for a change of clothes. Whereas most middle school females might become upset about the flow of their outfit being ruined for the day, Isla viewed the code as a sexist affront on the rights of females to select appropriate clothing for the school day.

Shari looked up to her daughter for her informed voice and she cherished that Isla had been able to shift her opinions on a variety of issues, like Gay Rights and racism. Isla looked up to her mother for being able to fight for her rights as a young teenage mom when she faced a lot of discrimination from strangers and her own family. What was remarkable about Isla was her delicate mix of being both a gentle soul and an outspoken advocate for marginalized groups. When asked what social cause she would like to support Isla paused for a long time, then stated:

Well, yeah, I am big on social justice. I notice a lot of people in our school are homophobic and that gets on my nerves a lot so I would like to do something to help that population the LGBTQ. That's a problem. I think that people should be more accepting and kind to people. That community they're not in our school, I've definitely noticed that.

Unlike her peers in this study, Isla marveled at creating an identity of equal access to institutional power, not by inheritance, but by traditional means of knowing the rules of the game. Like her mother at her age, she appeared to want to be known as the kid who made it despite others' thoughts that she may not.

8th Graders

Four 8th grade students and their mothers participated in this study. Similar to other grade levels in this study, the four student participants were purposely split between males and females. Three of the student participants identified as White and one male participant, Miguel, self-identified as Mexican-American, although his mother did not have Mexican heritage. Broadly categorized life themes were spread among the 8th grade participants to a stronger degree than the

6th and 7th grade students. Life themes included: (a) all families moved into Waldenburg Acres because of falling on hard financial times, (b) all had lived with, or currently live with a grandparent of the student participant so that living expenses could be shared, (c) three of the 8th grade trailer park parents were teenage mothers, and (d) three mothers and three fathers earned their high school diplomas in alternate ways due to being ejected or rejected by public schools. The impact of teenage motherhood upon available career choices were presented as life narratives that told of struggles of circumstance the mothers were in. In all four families, varying degrees of financial struggle made providing the necessities for their children difficult at times while working to keep the household afloat.

Charlie Davis.

I mean usually they're misunderstood. Like, I'm trying to think, um, I mean just where they're from, people automatically jump to that conclusion that well you're probably bad and I don't want to be around you. But like, there's me. I don't do any of the crap like most of these kids do. I just stick to myself whenever I do go around this park. And I'll say "Hi" to people and keep walking usually.

(Charlie Davis, Personal Interview, 7/16/17)

Charlie Davis was the closest to experiencing a successful social class border crossing in this study. This past year he finally found his niche at school when he was tentatively accepted into a social group I referred to as the scholar-athletes. Charlie lived with his mother, grandmother, and his grandmother's four-year-old, adopted African American son. The family also had two cats and a pet lizard. Charlie's father resided in Waldenburg Acres in the same home where Charlie spent his early years, when he was living with both parents. His parents broke-up in 2013 and Lucy Mason (Charlie's mother) and Charlie moved in with Charlie's grandmother who also lived in Waldenburg Acres. The two women pooled their tax returns to buy a used, four-bedroom, double-

wide home so that they could move out of the “dump,” as Lucy described. Charlie’s parents had been reunited as a couple since 2015, but Lucy was not yet ready to leave her mother and move back in with Charlie’s father. Lucy described Charlie’s father as consistent in his involvement with Charlie.

Charlie was taller than most 8th grade males. He had a natural physique of an athlete and his physique made him look older than fourteen. Charlie’s close resemblance to his mother was apparent. Although he towered over her, Lucy’s dark eyes, dark hair, and fair skin were replicated in her son. Charlie believed the qualities that described him best are *kind*, *helpful* and *funny*. He appeared to be most proud of his ability to make people laugh stating that, “I’m really good at making people laugh and stuff. Like I can get my mom rolling and it takes her like, a half hour to stop.”

Charlie was irritated by having to live in a mobile home community. Irritations with his home community recognized as personally affecting him were limited to the inability to play basketball on his driveway with a basketball hoop his father purchased for him. The neighbor across the street became upset when Charlie would shoot baskets because he worried the basketball would damage the skirting on his home. Other residents would scream at Charlie out of their car windows when he was shooting from the main street that bordered his home. Charlie did not see the point in adults becoming so upset because he always moved out of the way well in advance of their cars needing to pass. He described the encounters over his basketball playing and his rejection of his middle school peers who lived in Waldenburg Acres this way:

I don't get out with the kids living here because of the bad influence. Just usually you can't do much because I was playing basketball on my hoop for a bit and like a bunch of people drove by and few of them were like, "Hey! Stop playing. This isn't a playground." I'm just like, "I'm playing a little basketball. I'll get out of your way when you guys are coming across."

Charlie and his mother decided his basketball playing was not worth the constant hassle with residents of Waldenburg Acres. Charlie's basketball hoop was moved to his father's mobile home, which was away from the main street so it was easier for Charlie to play basketball without interruption and harassment.

Charlie wanted to be viewed as separate from the kids in Waldenburg Acres. The opening quote was in response to the questions: What was it like for the kids in Waldenburg Acres who self-select to avoid friendships with the kids living in the trailer park? How were they perceived? Charlie's perception of good kids and bad kids comes with mixed emotion. With guidelines put in place by Lucy, Charlie removed himself from associating with any of his peers in his neighborhood that he had gone to school with since Kindergarten. Charlie defended the "crap like most of these kids do" with comments that explained his understanding of their behaviors as a lack of supervision at home. At the same time, he was empathetic and felt a certain sense of loyalty to his former elementary school friends. Charlie greeted and engaged in small talk with kids from his neighborhood, stating that he was not rude to them and that he understood them. He felt he had nothing in common with the 8th graders he had known during most of his life.

Charlie had experienced a complicated and uncertain border crossing. He had to continue to try to make inroads into his new peer group, while coming from a social and cultural capital that

was far apart from his new friends. He had to reinvent himself in the image of his new peer group by pretending to achieve academically.

If Charlie makes it through the 11th grade he would have achieved more academically than his father. Charlie's father quit school and had worked in construction most of his adult life. Lucy described herself as a "problem child" who "...just didn't do my work, I you know, disrupted class, I was just a little you know what." She was kicked out of junior high and attended an alternative school, which she reported as more of an adult education program. Her junior high principal "had it out for me and would kick me out every chance she got." When she was 16, she quit school. When she turned 18, she knew she had to go to college because she had always wanted to be a nurse. She obtained her high school diploma by attending adult education classes. Afterward, she enrolled in the same Michigan based career college that Heather Collins attended to fulfill her life-long dream of becoming a nurse. Soon, Lucy found herself pregnant with Charlie and felt overwhelmed at the prospect of having to continue school and do clinical work while caring for a newborn baby. She relied on her college counselor, who steered her into getting a certification to work as an EKG technician. By the time Charlie was born, Lucy had graduated from her coursework in EKG. Afterward she found out that most EKG testing was conducted by nurses and that the need for technicians in this area was a dying field. Being that her employment prospects were slim, Lucy stayed home with Charlie and settled into the role of full-time mom. In 2007, Lucy returned to school at another local career and technical school to train to become a medical assistant. While working in this field she quickly learned that half of her paycheck was going to pay for daycare for Charlie. So, once again, Lucy found herself staying home with Charlie.

Years later, while working the midnight shift at a gas station for minimum wage, Lucy heard through a friend about the hiring of food service workers in Larimer Heights School District. Lucy was hired as a kitchen helper and within a week, was promoted to become the kitchen manager.

She described her surprise and worry at that time:

And I was like, oh my gosh! I never worked with food before. I can cut up fruits and vegetables and make a salad and I'm good. Whoa, because then it's paperwork, it's inventory, it's ordering, and it's feeding the whole school. So, I was just like okay are you sure? Do you think I can cause I've never done this before? I was straight up with them because I was scared.

Having a position that she liked, Lucy realized the value of enjoying your work. She would not entertain any thought other than Charlie going to college after high school.

Speaking of her role in monitoring Charlie's low work ethic during his upcoming high school years, Lucy shared:

I'm not going to mess around because this is important cause I want him to go to college and get a good job and be happy. He will go to college. Some people, you can want him to go to college, but what are you going to do? Pay for him to fail? I'm going to fight and I'm going to do everything I can. I'm praying. I mean I feel like it when I talk to him he seems to get it. He goes, "I know Mom, you're right I need to get it together." That's what he said in the car today.

When Lucy's father died he left Charlie \$10,000 to be used towards his college education. Lucy was hoping to increase that savings in the next four years. She realized that amount of money will fall short of paying for a four-year degree. Charlie shared that he was aware that his parents are reaching for him to do better in life. According to Charlie, his father encouraged him in the following way:

He says to listen. Do your homework. I know you don't like homework. I didn't, but it's what you have to get done. He always talks about how if he would have listened to his dad, he would have been a lot better off.

And his mother offered the following:

My mom always tells me you can do it, you just have to put your mind to it and stuff like that. It's pretty much all on you. We can't do much because we don't know what the teachers give you. You're the only one that knows that kind of stuff. So, she tells me to work hard and put your mind to it, but she also reminds you that it's your job that I'm not the student.

When I asked Charlie what it took to be successful in life, he responded "hard work and dedication." Three times Charlie mentioned hard work when he described his road map to high school graduation, college acceptance, and overall life success. The peculiar aspect of Charlie and his parents' view that he should work hard to achieve greater success than they had implied that they had not worked hard. In their biographical sketches overwhelming evidence of hard work existed where both parents were concerned. Perhaps the hard work for Lucy and Charlie's father came too late and was now the vehicle through which their lives are a constant catch up with decisions that were made during their adolescent years. A more plausible explanation may be that calling for hard work, as part of our national narrative, is simplistic. Charlie was pushed towards believing in hard work as the only key to a different life. Charlie's new peer group knew differently. Single-family home students did have to work hard to achieve, but the trailer park kids wanting the same things from life, had to work harder. They had to ignore negative perceptions so they could focus on school. Students like Charlie knew that he entered school at a different starting place and lacked the advantage single-family home students enjoyed.

During field work, I observed Charlie transcending his role as a trailer park kid and becoming part of a peer group whom all lived in exclusive single-family home subdivisions and gated communities. This group of 8th grade scholar-athletes confidently gathered together in-between classes to talk and joke around. They were a rather large group that all ate lunch together. During my lunchtime observations, Charlie sat behind the group at the next table parallel to theirs, with his lunch on his lap. He jumped into conversation by shouting over shoulders. His full acceptance by all members of the scholar-athlete group was tentative, pending further informal initiations. Charlie and John Worshum were the only students from the trailer park that did not sit at the lunch table known as the trailer park table.

Class time was different from cafeteria time. During class, Charlie sat by either one or the other of his friends from the scholar-athlete group, Gerald or Terrance. Charlie occasionally spent time with both boys outside of school, and he had a stronger friendship with Terrance than Gerald. When it was Charlie's birthday, Lucy dropped Terrance off at home after the boys went to a movie together. Peering at Terrance's house through the car window, Charlie asked his mother, "Why can't we live in a house like this?" Lucy explained her response this way:

You know and I was like well, it's not all about where you live, you know it's about the kind of person you are and do they give you problems with living in a trailer park? Do they know that you live in a trailer park? And he's like, "Yeah." And I said and they're still two of your best friends, correct? And he said like, "Yeah." And I said well that shows what kind of people they are they're not judging because they live in these big houses and you live in a trailer.

This viewpoint was not exclusive to Lucy. The 8th grade parent participants were consistent in their viewpoint that if the single-family home students selected to reject their children because of

their status as trailer park kids then they were not the type of person they would want their children to be around anyway. At the same time parents taught their children reactionary rejection, the trailer park kids were more sophisticated than their parents in their understanding of the gap in social and cultural capital among the students at Kearney. The trailer park kids had lived the gap in social and cultural capital while in school, 35 hours per week. Their understanding reflected a level of intimacy with school experience that their parents were immune from experiencing. Consider the following exchange when I was interviewing Lucy in her home and Charlie invited himself to the table at a crucial moment. I had asked Lucy to comment on the experience of being a resident in the only manufactured home community in Larimer Heights that allowed children:

Lucy: I think Larimer Heights is a lot of uppities, you know. All the other kids, and I mean not everyone has a huge house, but most of them live in big houses. Like these communities, like you drive by so many of them everywhere you go. You know, it's pretty much most of the kids live in big houses. And you know it's Larimer so I feel like um, there's a lot of well, I'm better then you probably because you live in a trailer and I live in a house, a big house, which I try to teach him that that doesn't make or break you. Who you are is what matters, not where you live and it's not like we're living in a dump. It's a nice place, you know and you shouldn't care if somebody judges you for where you live, then they're not the type of people you need to be around. They should like you for who you are not where you live. So, do you agree? Seriously.

Charlie: Yeah.

Lucy: Do you get embarrassed? Do you tell people where you live? You probably try to keep it from them.

Charlie: I'm not really embarrassed, it's just-

Lucy: You probably know where they live so you don't want to say where you live.

Charlie: Yeah.

On numerous occasions like this one, I had witnessed the bewildered nature of the trailer park parents in reaching for understanding as to why single-family home parents forbade their children to be friends with trailer park kids. Heather Collins thought the distance was due to her age and her husband's appearance. Shari Labrowski asked me if the trailer park kids ever made good friends with kids living outside of the trailer park since she had never seen "outside" kids in the trailer park. The separation between trailer park kids and single-family home kids based on differences in home size and neighborhood aesthetics spoke to the importance of objectified capital, but it was shallow and ignored the core issue. Missing was the depth that adolescent experience could bring to the understandings. Many trailer park kids stopped short of being honest with parents about their understanding of their school experiences to protect their parents from shame. In the exchange above, Charlie came close to finding the words to push beyond his mother's understanding of comparison in homes or neighborhoods, but then instantly decided to keep his response to his mother's inquiry short and sanitized.

Lucy positioned Charlie in ways that prevented him from relationships with his neighborhood acquaintances. She frequently referenced other children in the trailer park who she felt were without proper supervision. Lucy was determined to have Charlie align himself with "a group that is doing things with their lives" like, Gerald and Terrance. Part of the price Lucy and Charlie paid for attempts at transcendence out of a trailer park peer group was their constant worry Charlie's scholar-athlete membership would be reversed:

Lucy: But I feel there's probably stereotypes on kids like I worry um, is like Terrance's Mom going to find out he lives in a trailer park? And is she going to say, you know, without giving, if she, you know, gives him a chance and learns about

him and who he is, um, but I do worry about that, like is he going to make a good friend and then parents are going to find out he lives in the trailer park.

Me: How would you counter that if it happens?

Lucy: I don't think you should have to. I think that people should give people a chance to you know, see what kind of people they are. "Oh, he lives in the trailer park. He's probably a bad kid so you're not hanging out with him."

The paradoxical energy Lucy displayed placed her perceptions of trailer park kids in congruence with her fears of how she perceived single-family home parents might view Charlie. Lucy wanted others on the outside to give Charlie a chance; yet by dismissing trailer park kids as a bad influence on her son, she avoided giving them a chance. Lucy's insistence that Charlie stayed away from trailer park kids who were not doing anything productive with their lives was rooted in her own adolescent experience. She was fearful of the quality of life Charlie may inherit if he selected the *wrong* group to befriend:

I told him you want to be in a group that is doing things with their lives. If you're hanging out with people that don't want to do anything with their lives, hanging out with bad people, getting bad grades, acting like idiots, that's what you're gonna be. If you put yourself, you know like Terrance, he's in football, basketball, this that and the other. He's an achiever. He's going somewhere, you know. And that's what I tell him. You have to align yourself with good people. People that want to do something with their lives and that's what you need to want. If you don't get good grades you're not going to go to a good college and you're not going to have a good job and feel comfortable and stress about bills all the time and be able to take care of a family and be happy and be able to go do things. If you don't you're going to work at McDonalds. You're going to be living in my basement. Like which one do you want?

With this advice in mind, Charlie attempted to carve out space in widening circles of the scholar athlete group, but with limited success. An act of purposeful exclusion leveled at Charlie during the end of the year 8th grade field trip was explained:

Well it was at the Tiger game and I saw some guys I usually hang out with going down [the steps in the stadium] and I went and followed them and they're like, one kid was like, "Get out of here!" And I was like, okay. I just went to go and sit and watch the rest of the game with Terrance.

The exclusionary action above, worked in compilation with awareness that it was exhausting to continually seek out escape routes from being included in the negative stigma associated with Waldenburg Acres. When I asked Charlie for his perspective about the common belief that the students from Waldenburg Acres had more *drama* than other kids, he responded this way:

I feel like that's connected to kids with people mostly against them because of where they live. Like they get emotional, like emotionally distraught, and like they don't know how to deal with things yet so it causes them to break down and it's sad and it's messed up...that's what people think of them. They may not be that and they know that people don't think that.

More than any other exchange during my interviews with Charlie, this answer established his full separation from his former elementary school friends. Charlie talked about his Waldenburg Acres peers' experiences as something he was empathetic about, but also as something unfamiliar to his direct experience.

The immense gap in social and cultural capital between Charlie and his single-family home peers was most evident in the differences in (a) extracurricular activities (b) academic achievement and (c) connectedness to school. Charlie had unstructured time after school, except during football season. The after-school schedules of students like Terrance were full of sports and/or music practice, religious education, homework/study sessions supervised by parents, or private tutoring, or scheduled time at a local tutoring company. The only unstructured time for Charlie was when Lucy insisted he complete homework and stop the video games for the night. Charlie avoided

going outside and hanging-out with the other kids in the trailer park. Occasionally he would take a walk around his neighborhood by himself or with Lucy. Charlie stayed home after school and played with his uncle, watched TV with his grandmother, or played video games with a network of on-line gamers. Charlie was content in doing just enough schoolwork at the very last moment to get by.

Being on the school football team had helped Charlie to form friendship bonds with the scholar athlete group. While on the football team, he earned the highest marks he had earned since his 6th grade school year, even earning a spot on the A/B school honor roll. For the following three quarters of Charlie's 8th grade school year his grades fluctuated between Cs, Ds and Es. Charlie's academic patterning began in the 6th grade. He would fall behind in his studies and then spend time catching up. While he was falling behind, he managed his disengagement by covering up what he was supposed to do for homework when Lucy would ask him. As soon as his grades reached above a C, he used free time to play video games, non-stop. Lucy described this constant battle with her son as Charlie literally begging her for more time playing. Sometimes Charlie won. At times when Lucy gave up the fight, Charlie played video games long into the night, all the while contending that he either had no homework or that he had already completed his homework. Often times this was not true.

This pattern, of not telling the truth about his student responsibilities, was one that both Charlie and Lucy are determined to break at the onset of Charlie's freshman year. If their collective effort was to preserve the inroads Charlie had made into his new peer group, then reinventing himself as a high school scholar must be enacted. Charlie's argument was in middle school

academic performance did not count. While he looked at energy spent in middle school logically, his peer group had habits secure enough to achieve in the top tiers of their graduating class. For Charlie, academic success meant continual self-discipline in changing uncomplimentary academic habits which were solidified during middle school.

Angela Knight.

It's probably as close as you can get to a neighborhood in a manufactured home park...when I think of a trailer park I think of the trailers like you see in the movie Eight Mile.

(Helen Knight, Personal Interview, 06/09/17)

Helen Knight was the mother of Angela Knight. The Knight family recognized a myriad of ways in which living in Waldenburg Acres had benefitted the life trajectories of the Knight children. The Knight family moved to Waldenburg Acres as the result of being forced out of their rental home in a suburban area about 30 minutes south of Larimer Heights. The family was living with the father of Mrs. Knight. A succession of unfortunate events caused them to leave their community, where they were happy, and look for a place elsewhere. The first event, Mrs. Knight's father died and shortly thereafter, Mr. Knight quit his job to avoid the humiliation of outsourcing. According to Angela, her father has been diagnosed with fibromyalgia which makes him sleep all day long. Despite this diagnosis, he recently completed coursework to obtain certification in robotics, but has been unable to find employment in his field due to lack of experience. To keep the family financially afloat, Mrs. Knight worked full-time as a caregiver in a nursing home. She summarized the move to Waldenburg Acres this way:

We looked all around. We were actually ready to move into a one bedroom trailer in ---. They were going to let us do that just because we were desperate. And this manufactured home came up and we decided to look at it. We almost didn't because it seemed too good to be true. And we checked it out and the lady told us we could put a \$100 refundable deposit on it. That would hold it for ten days because they made it cash for the trailer, we could not finance it. And I said, "Well what do we have to lose at this point, we get our money back." Um, I made a phone call to my brother. My husband made a phone call to his father. We were able to come up with the money and it worked out, and it was kind of meant to be I guess.

Helen believed the schools in Larimer Heights made a huge impact on all four of her children. Her experience in public school ended when she convinced her parents that correspondence learning was cheaper because they could avoid purchasing clothing for her. Correspondence learning allowed Heather to earn a high school diploma free of the endless teasing she endured because of the clothing she wore to school. Before the correspondence school, she rallied her mother to remove her from her junior high school and send her to a local Lutheran school. With six weeks remaining in junior high, she was enrolled in a different public junior high school, which Helen said did nothing to improve her situation. Throughout her public schooling years, she had high absences because she found school to be an emotionally painful experience. Helen described her father as older and the "do whatever you want to do, you're going to do it anyways" type of parent. Helen finished the correspondence program and graduated high school a few years after the age appropriate time frame. Having become pregnant with her oldest daughter, and then her oldest son, she finally finished as a married mother of two young children.

Helen's schooling experience influenced her attitude about her children's schooling. When the Knight family moved to Larimer Heights, Helen drove them to their prior schools for the rest of the school year. The following year, Helen enrolled her children in the Larimer Heights School

District and found out that her two oldest children were behind academically. Helen described this time with gratitude for the supports put in place to bring her children up to speed with the tempo and rigor of the Larimer Heights School District. Her oldest daughter's counselor at the high school periodically checked in with her sophomore daughter to make sure she was on track to graduate. By comparison, Helen reported that with no indication she was struggling, her former counselor met with her one time during her freshman school year. In her junior year, Helen's oldest daughter took three classes at the high school and then rode a bus to one of the three county-wide trade school facilities. She graduated with certification in collision repair and was attending a local community college with a focus on early childhood. Helen considered her oldest son, who was in the 8th grade his first year as a student in Larimer Heights, equally as fortunate. After having a rough start his first quarter of school, his 8th grade counselor at Kearney placed him in Math Lab and checked in with him once a day to make sure his homework was completed and that he was organized for his school day. Currently, he was on track to attend the countywide trade school his sister attended. Helen was sincere in her view that the schools in Larimer Heights had been amazing for her children. She went on to explain that if she and her husband had known about Waldenburg Acres years ago they would have made the move then.

Angela was in the fifth grade when she entered Larimer Heights Schools. She was doing fine academically, but had some challenges with making friends since "everybody already had their friend groups." When I met Angela, she was struggling academically. I was aware of her as a struggling student when she was in the 7th grade. Her counselor had numerous talks with her that year, but nothing changed. At the meetings, Angela admitted to her counselor that she had to do

the assigned work to bring her grades up. She was kept out of intervention courses because she did well when she completed her work (she was able to pass tests and quizzes without any academic participation) and because she repeatedly promised her counselor that she would start to participate in school. Her behavior rarely changed enough to make an impact beyond earning Ds, Es and occasional C range grades.

When I met Angela it was in the context of her staying after school in my classroom to be tutored in mathematics by a high school National Honor's Society student. Like Charlie, Angela was one of the tallest students in the 8th grade. She could typically be seen wearing jeans, tennis shoes, and solid color tops on any school day. Angela would frequently go all day long without eating. Much of this choice, for Angela and two other 8th grade students in this research (Gwen and Miguel), might have to do with not wanting to be identified as someone who eats both breakfast and lunch at school since the 6th grade. The responses from all three 8th grade students when asked why they refuse to eat at school centered on two reasons: (a) they were not hungry and (b) they did not like the food the school serves.

Given her size, and her certainty of who she was, Angela traveled the immensity of Kearney in stealth like fashion. She was often noted finding areas of quiet to sit on a hallway bench with her one friend who also lived in the trailer park. This tucked away bench was her sanctuary from the hallway crowds before school began. Angela usually arrived in class well within the allotted five minutes of passing time. She described her existence in school this way:

At school, I'm in my own little bubble and it's like in the hallways I just walk...like if somebody tries talking to me I tell them I need to go to class and then like if I see

something happening I'll step in and then like I just don't really talk to people during passing time. Then in class if it's like the beginning I'll talk to people.

The hallways appeared to be a vulnerable space for trailer park kids. They did their best to hide from either judgmental stares or the overall ownership of the space claimed by the single-family home students. It was common for some trailer park kids to arrive in class without the materials needed. If they were not fast enough in getting to their lockers, or assertive enough to edge through the crowd standing in front of their lockers, they lost access to their lockers. For students like Angela, getting to her locker was not an issue since she had enough confidence to know the space equally belonged to her. If she entered the hallways late, Angela muscled through the crowd to get what she needed. Kearney teachers who offered a fist bump or verbal acknowledgment of the trailer park kids, championed their value in front of single-family home kids and in a sense, recognized their marginalization in hallway spaces.

Helen described her parental role toward schooling as, "I try to, to come in and I come home from work and ask who has homework and different things, but there's only so much I can do without standing over them and hovering." Helen was frustrated with Angela's lack of consistency with her schoolwork and achievement. Her expectations for Angela were to be independent in her studies, work hard and be successful. Angela understood this, but full engagement in school was inconsistent. Helen was hopeful about Angela's plan for high school:

She wants to get involved in some more things in school. I'm just hoping academics this past year's been very trying academically with her. I don't know where this is coming from but I hear a lot of in middle school the grades don't matter. Those words have been for me, they make me want to shake her and say, "Listen everything you do in life matters, even school, no matter what grade." But, I'm hoping she changes her study habits around and follows through with everything

she's planning on doing and high school is going to be amazing for her. She's already talked to me about homecoming dresses and prom shoes and all that stuff, so.

The adolescent theme of grades in middle school not mattering was one attitude trailer park parents combated. Helen's parenting style had not made an academic impact on Angela. After third quarter grades came out last year, Helen took Angela's phone from her. Before leaving for school Angela was required to leave her phone in her parent's bedroom "for like a week, so it wasn't that bad." Angela admitted this consequence missed the intention since her behavior continued uninterrupted.

When I asked, what she could do to raise her grade point average, she replied, "Well, me not turning in work that was kind of a habit throughout middle school, so unless I change that." When asked why she procrastinated throughout middle school, she responded, "Just didn't feel like doing it cause there are better things to do then being at home doing work even though you were at school for like seven hours." Angela had difficulty recognizing connection between her middle school work ethic and how it might influence her chances of becoming a surgeon or chef (her two adult life choices).

Angela described her after school activities as eating "cereal or something" then taking a nap. When foregoing her nap she watched You Tube or Netflix, played video games, or roamed around the trailer park with friends. Angela preferred the outdoors, even in the winter. She took advantage of Waldenburg Acres connected by woods to a state park complete with playground equipment, public bathrooms, and a sledding hill. She reported that she usually ate her dinner in her room and went to bed at 2:00 AM. Her lack of sleep hindered academic achievement. She referenced her sleep schedule on three occasions, but resisted it was a problem:

Just like when school is in session I'd stay awake till like two in the morning watching Netflix, but like I was perfectly fine during the school day, but if I went to bed at like 9 or 10 I was so tired. Yeah, cause like oversleeping makes you tired.

Angela reported that the most difficult thing about middle school was "having to wake up that early" which would be difficult for any adolescent after four hours of sleep. Helen believed her children better off in Larimer Heights schools than most other school districts in the metropolitan Detroit area. I asked Helen to explain given that Angela was not passing any of her core curriculum classes. Her response demonstrated belief in hard work and building resiliency:

You have to work harder. That's what it is. I know we talked about potential with kids. I know what my kid's potentials are. I know they can do it. There's no reason why she shouldn't have a minimum of a B average and that's just by turning in her homework and working hard at it. Life's not easy. There's always going to be challenges and you have to overcome them.

Helen's philosophy on life appeared to have made an impact on the identity formation of Angela. Memorable was the comment Helen made about Angela's high school prom and homecoming. From Helen's perspective, a former student with high absenteeism, having a daughter committed to being involved in traditional high school dances, was pleasing. Corresponding to being pleased with her daughter's commitment to high school was Helen's comfort in knowing advice she had given her had an impact on shaping Angela's identity formation. Helen described her daughter this way:

She's a very compassionate person. She tries her best to help people even if it's not going to benefit her, let's see, benefit is not what I'm looking for. Even if that person is going to be mad at her. Like if you were in trouble and something bad is going to happen to you she's going to let someone know to try to help you so you might end up mad at her at the end of the day, but she's still trying to do the right thing.

Angela's compassion showed when she volunteered weekly at the nursing home where Helen worked. She helped the activities director with social activities and games for the residents. More than compassion, Angela demonstrated an assertive identity unlike more of her peers from Waldenburg Acres. Once, Angela refused to walk down a street in Waldenburg Acres that most trailer park kids are told to avoid. The friend she was with repeatedly tried to coax Angela to break her mother's rule by traveling down the street, stating that Helen would never find out. Angela phoned her friend's mother to tell her that her daughter was planning on walking down the street. On another occasion, when students were cheating on a test by writing the answers on their desks, Angela told the teacher. Yet, on another occasion, Angela lost a friend by reporting to her counselor that her friend was causing self-harm by using an eraser to repeatedly burn the skin away on her arm. All three of these assertive acts were remarkable. Developmentally, 13-year old youth are more likely to keep quiet to save friendships.

Like most trailer park kids, Angela claimed to have friends living outside Waldenburg Acres. Her outside friends had never been over to her house. Friends had invited Angela to their homes in outside neighborhoods three times. Two of the three times were to complete school assigned projects and the other time was for a birthday party. This amount of time spent together outside of school over the course of three years challenged most defining terms of strong friendships. For some of the trailer park kids, their claims to have friends from single-family home neighborhoods might be viewed as a need to belong, as much as it was to avoid the marginalization of being a trailer park kid. Angela was friendly with everyone who lived in Waldenburg Acres and freely shared that, "A lot of them they're like really, like bad sometimes, like bad influences and

like, I know better than to hang out with them.” This awareness, that she was not like the *bad* kids from the trailer park, was part of the assertiveness that Angela drew upon to navigate school and her neighborhood.

Her strength in knowing right from wrong, came from Helen who taught her children, “If you can look back at yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and be okay with the person that’s looking back at you that’s what matters.” Her parenting philosophy of letting children make their own choices and trusting they make decisions beneficial to their own personal growth had been tested by her children. She recalled when her oldest daughter voted for Donald Trump, against both the political affiliation and sentiments of their entire family. Helen admitted that she wrestled greatly with this, but in the end, she decided to view this as a proud moment:

For a kid to do that when they have family members that are trying to tear them down it just makes you proud. It makes you proud to know that everything you instilled in them has come back whether I agree or disagree with her beliefs she has her own.

Angela had her own beliefs about living in Waldenburg Acres. She reported that coming to Larimer Heights was a smart move for her family financially. Angela believed that people who spend tons of money on large houses are making unwise financial decisions because they could be using that money to “help someone else out.” She understood the perception at Kearney that “a lot of people think that they’re like really poor because we live in there. It’s not true.” When I asked how she responded to that perception she stated, “Just tell them that it’s not true. I just say that you can’t judge somebody by where they live. Their family might have something wrong and they can’t really help it.” Angela shared that she had lost friends after they found out where she lived.

By shaking her head no, she reported, “Ah, if they don’t want to be friends because of that then they really have no thoughts about like, what could be going on in my life.” Angela appeared to be disappointed in the lack of empathy among the single-family home kids at Kearney. Her choice of her best friend was empathetic since she was a former homeless student who was marked in school by the taxi that transported her to and from school for two years. Angela had learned a lot from her mother. Helen shared that she tried to instill in her children something she learned years ago from her older brother:

If your friends come to your house and they come back again then they’re really your friends. If they come to your house and they don’t come back because they’ve judged you on where you live because of your parents or anything like that then they were never truly your friend to begin with so I’ve kind of tried to instill that into them.

This type of life experience and self-pride keeps Helen believing that her family, although stretched financially, was in the privileged category. She realized the stigma surrounding people who lived in manufactured home communities and admitted that even she used to think of trailer parks as environments similar to the depiction in the film *Eight Mile*. Helen drew a clear distinction between manufactured home communities, like Waldenburg Acres, and actual *trailer parks*. Even so, she stopped short of referring to Waldenburg Acres as a neighborhood stating that it was as close as you can get to one.

Gwen Radcliff.

It isn’t like I feel okay with where I live. Like, I actually want to move though, but I’m not like, it’s not a bad, bad place. Yeah, it’s Larimer Heights, it’s not like one of the Eight Mile, it’s not Eight Mile.

(Gwen Radcliff, Personal Interview, 05/14/2017)

I had known Gwen in the context of her being a student in the study skills course that I supervised during both her 7th and 8th grade school years. Gwen exceeded all other participants in acknowledgment of the way single-family home students dismissed the trailer park kids in school. She spent nearly all her middle school years assessing her worth in relation to the objectified capital of others. Did she have a wide enough variety of clothing, shoes and other goods? What was the value of her possessions in comparison with the value of what other kids had? Would they find out where I live? Were my projects good enough? She was never valued in the presence of the single-family home students at Kearney, especially the girls. The pressure of not being able to measure up to what others wore in school, the appearance of their projects, remarks about trailer trash, all of this spilled into a final tier of stress. Gwen was extending extraordinary effort trying to make it through her third year at Kearney. Gwen sought out relief from the pressure and left school at the start of the third quarter. She enrolled in an on-line school.

Gwen's young life had been rife with reversals and metamorphosis. Her on-line school experience was no exception. Gwen completed her daily on-line schooling in a couple of hours and felt unchallenged academically. After a few weeks, Gwen reversed her decision and returned to Kearney, with a nose piercing. She was a naturally beautiful girl who refused the adolescent make-up ritual, so it was easy to notice her green eyes. On some days she wore her long, straight, auburn hair in its natural state. Other days, she wore a single ponytail at the back of her head.

Gwen hated attention called to her. This explained why her return to Kearney caused ponderings among the single-family home students. A rumor started whether Gwen was absent

due to being in a juvenile detention center. This rumor was founded and promoted largely by single-family home students who may have been a bit jealous of Gwen's natural beauty. Her nose piercing was the only one at Kearney so it was a great topic of concern. Some teachers remarked "What kind of mother would let their kid do that?"

Her comparison to Eight Mile (a popular 2002 film which depicted the life story of Eminem) mirrored sentiment expressed by residents of the trailer park. Many participants entered into a comparison that portrayed a disdain for their community, but validated prestige of the community by its location in Larimer Heights. The unease residents of Waldenburg Acres felt with their trailer park status was tempered by the fact that at least their trailer park was in Larimer Heights. The location of Waldenburg Acres could have brought residents higher status among others that may reside in trailer parks in working-class or rural communities.

Gwenn and Gloria lived with their two dogs and one cat. Their living space was a singlewide, three-bedroom mobile home. Gloria obtained a mortgage for their home when Gwen was in the fourth grade. Lately the maintenance needed on the home had been a stressor on Gloria. Keeping up with the outside and inside of a manufactured home was trying for some homeowners, especially when the aging process happened faster than single-family homes. She noted that her home was probably one that neighbors complain about as Gwen had a sheet hanging in her front of the house bedroom window for curtains:

For us right now, everything is falling apart. The dogs kept getting in her room and they would climb up because she's got it's almost like a window seat and they kept climbing up in there and lying down and they ripped her curtain rod down so she put a sheet up and I'm like that's what we-she wanted, you know, well she needs privacy because she's up in the front. And I'm like I'll get a new curtain rod and

she's like I already have a sheet I'm really-and of course it's been a week. And I mean and yeah, our railing, again animals, you guys are just rotten little buggers [talking to her dogs]. They broke the railing, um, the other railing that went up the steps, um that's broken so it's got to be replaced, but yeah so people who have walked past here are probably like, she, the railings gone, the steps are a mess, but it's just, you know, I mean-

Gloria and Gwen's home was moved to Waldenburg Acres from "somewhere down south." The floor literally began to show signs of splitting in half about one year after they moved in. When Gloria inquired about the split with the on site relator, she was told that was the settling of the home after the move up north and "soft spots" were inevitable. Gloria felt she had no recourse, the only choice was to continue to live there and hope that the floor would not fully separate. This incidence was one of many where the residents of Waldenburg Acres were caught in a web of exploitation. The lasting effects of the exploitive practices in place at Waldenburg Acres were components of the tense and heavy air I felt when in the neighborhood.

For Gloria, the monthly cost of living in Waldenburg Acres ran parallel to the cost of a modest two or three-bedroom home in metropolitan Detroit cities that are east of Larimer Heights. By the time Gloria paid her lot rent, which was \$630.00 a month, her mortgage payment, and her winter heating bills (averaging \$300.00 a month), she was in the range of a mortgage payment on a single-family home in a less prestigious area. Upon purchasing the home, the lack of insulation was kept hidden from Gloria. When Gloria inquired about the high heating bills, blame was placed on her by the on site relator company. Gloria was told he should have asked about insulation when she purchased her home and not afterward. Possible home maintenance funds were consistently diverted to pay high heating and air conditioning bills.

Gloria had four stepchildren, which she played a large part in raising while married to her first husband. Her stepchildren's ages ranged from seven to ten when Gwen was born. When Gwen was two years old, Gloria was simultaneously going through a divorce and fighting in court to gain custody of her step-children who were in foster care. Both biological parents lost all parental rights to all four children. Gloria fought for custody of three of her stepchildren because she felt it was important to keep the children together as a family with Gwen:

They didn't have their mom, they didn't...their dad was just emotionally unavailable and then his rights were terminated and they just, where were they going to go? I mean they were Gwen's siblings and I loved them so, and they felt like they didn't deserve to be where they were, obviously in foster care. Um and so, you know, I felt like they needed to be with me, and they needed to be with her, and they needed to be with each other, so. . .

The consequence from being summoned to attend so many court hearings: to finalize her divorce, to present knowledge of the children in court, and to gain custody, cost Gloria her job in a surgeon's office:

...but in the meantime, I lost my job because most managers are like well we love you but you're never here. So, you know, we have to have somebody that's here. Um, so I was working for a surgeon at the time and it's not like just anybody can come in and do your work for you, they can't. You know if you're not there there's not somebody taking staples out or assisting, you know, doing things that need to be done so um, I ended up losing my job and from that I just kind of spiraled a little bit-

Gloria was awarded custody of her three stepchildren and thereafter she struggled to provide stability within her new family dynamic. Having three children in their early teen years exhibiting varying degrees of rebellion proved more challenging for Gloria than anticipated:

And so, um, it was always something happening here something happening there, you know it ends up one thing after another, um and money was just essentially

non-existent, like I couldn't, I had a couple of jobs here or there, but I couldn't keep em long enough to like really get anything going cause it seems like I'd go to work and something would happen, or I was getting calls at work, or I was too tired from dealing with everything that was going on. There were calls from the school, --- just wasn't going to school. I'd drop her off one door and she'd walk in and out the other, so. --- has Asperger's and she unfortunately has a very off putting personality so, she wasn't, you couldn't tell that she had Asperger's, the teachers knew, but she had got under their skin, like really bad. I had the counselor call me and say can you just come and get her today, I can't do this, I can't do this today. And that was the gossip at the school. And um, because I had to separate the kids into different schools because they could not be close to each other because they would start fighting.

Gloria realized that young Gwen "felt lost in the mix because there was always so much going on." When Gwen was young she learned to avoid creating conflict because her teenage step-sisters and step-brother provided enough conflict in the household.

As a youngster, Gwen moved a lot. Time ran out on being able to afford the \$850.00 a month rental payment on the suburban home they were living in. When Gloria's mother moved out, that accelerated the move she and her children made to Waldenburg Acres. By the time Gwen was in second grade, she had attended three different schools, in three different school districts. Even with the transient nature of Gwen's early life, Gloria enacted agency in advocating for her daughter's education.

Gwen's kindergarten experience was interrupted when Gloria pulled her out of the school she attended after two days of Kindergarten. Attempting to remove Gwen from her home school in a city close to Detroit, she phoned a school district that was farther north and asked about open enrollment. The district Gloria solicited allowed Gwen to be a student there. In her new school, Gwen experienced what could be referred to as a normal Kindergarten year. For her first-grade

school year, the family had moved to Larimer Heights. Gloria had remarried and only one step-child remained with her. The new family rented a home near downtown. Halfway through Gwen's second grade school year, Gloria moved again with Gwen. Her second marriage was over and this time Gwen did attend her home school. For two years she attended school in a city that borders Detroit. When Gwen was in the fourth grade, Gloria bought her home in Waldenburg Acres. Gwen was back with her former second grade classmates Mason Elementary School in Larimer Heights.

Gloria's intervention in Gwen's early education had been a pattern throughout her schooling years. Gloria was a strong advocate for her daughter, but the outcomes decided upon by schools did not always go in her favor. Through the years, Gloria had to intervene in areas of Gwen's well-being more than her academic progress. As Gwen grew older, Gloria scaled back helping her with homework and projects, leaving Gwen to take total personal responsibility for her achievement. Demonstrated by the comment, "She's going to be responsible or things aren't going to get done," Gloria acknowledged Gwen's propensity to procrastinate. Often, Gwen's assignments and projects were turned in late. Gloria described her daughter's work habits concerning school as "...periods where she's like I'm going to get organized, I got all my supplies, I'm gonna come home and do my homework every day. You know it'll be a day or two and then she'll like just stops totally." Gwen was smart and earned high marks. But, the environment surrounding her in school had a paralyzing effect on her ability to consistently participate in school to similar degrees as the single-family home kids.

When Gwen returned to Larimer Heights as a fourth grader, she was anxious all the time.

In her desire to move Gwen back to Larimer Heights, Gloria had not anticipated this reaction:

Anxiety peaked when we moved back the second time. The kids had moved on and she started to realize the difference in material goods----you know that was kind of a blow and then being aware that she's not getting to do as much as the other kids are get to do or getting to buy as much as the other kids are get to buy. You now it all started sinking in. And so that became more of a, an issue.

Gloria worked hard to provide clothing similar to what the single-family home girls wore, but she found it was difficult to keep up:

Oh, it's horrible I feel awful because it's like I want to buy her you know, 300\$ rain boots but in my head, I'm like there's no way I'm paying 300\$ for it. Like I could buy her, you know, three, four outfits and shoes to go with em for that, you know, and I know shoes are a big thing but I can't like it's just that I can't do that. I just don't have that laying around.

The connection between not having the economic means to wear designer clothing in school, and not turning in projects, or being hesitant about giving classroom presentations was best described by Gwen. She purposely made her presentations late so that she only had to share it with her teacher during lunch. Believing in her strong reading ability, there was one presentation where Gwen drew on her resiliency:

And I'm just really pumped for it, but then on another level, I feel like I need to, like have, I'm kind of scared to like present it because I feel like it's not going to look great, I guess. Like it's not going to like, look-up to like other people's standards because it's my project it's not going to look good, but on my other hand, like, I'm also like okay, whatever, I'm really excited about this.

This mix between being excited to share your project and being worried that your project might not measure up to other student work could be part of some adolescence's experience in middle school no matter the social class status of the student. Gwen's response to projects and presentations extended beyond the quintessential middle school angst. The students at Kearney were positioned as having greater worth relative to how they provided evidence of flawless

academic achievement. Bringing in a project for school that lacked items purchased for enhancement and that lacked outsider expertise was humiliating for Gwen. Even if the exhibition involved an area of strength for Gwen, like her reading ability, she wavered between excitement and anxiety. When I asked Gwen why she did not always complete projects she connected what might be viewed as inconsistent motivation to the student culture at Kearney:

It's, it's probably connected sometimes to the thing with like kids sometimes because they'll um...talk about like how good their projects are and how like some kids say like how horrible other kid's projects are. And with like kids that they say how horrible their projects, you actually thought are really good and everything and then you'll just be like, oh, mine's even worse, I don't even, I kinda don't want to share it now.

Gwen deferred to a lack of resources that intruded upon her capacity to be a participant in school at levels similar to privileged students. Referring to social class advantage as “the thing” Gwen’s astuteness was steered by her life experience. When pressure became too intense, she selected the choice that offered her greater dignity, to participate on her terms, which was always past the expected due date.

Awareness of the complicated dynamics surrounding social class difference and how this positioned students and families from Waldenburg Acres was a thread running through the lives of Gloria and Gwen. Gloria’s understanding of how lack of resources might be experienced as increased social pressures for some trailer park families was explained:

There’s definitely drugs in here, there’s no doubt about that. Um, unfortunately, I don’t want to say poor people, but people with less means I think don’t necessarily have coping skills sometimes for whatever reason and um, and there’s more of a chance of, there’s more of a chance of um, you know, just like domestic violence maybe or a lot of single moms and they’re trying to, you know, get by with their kids.

She referenced teacher perspective about trailer park kids as lacking in understanding and having preference for students with more economic resources at their disposal:

Um, I think automatically and unfortunately, I think the teachers know most kids that come from mobile homes their parents don't have the resources really to fight and a lot of time you know it's single parents and who can't take off of work because Mr. --- yelled at my daughter. Do you know what I mean? Who can follow through? So, I think you know, I, I just, I feel like that's a definite drawback. I don't think teachers are ever going to admit feeling differently about kids who are in the wealthier homes versus kids that live in mobile homes.

The presence of street drugs in Waldenburg Acres was mentioned by six out of eight parent participants and by four student participants. Gloria's understanding of the relationship between economic stress, drugs and domestic violence influenced her perceptions of some of her neighbors. Her observations were similar to the outside perceptions of the types of lives that trailer park residents live. Gloria believed that the behaviors listed above are just as likely to be occurring in the single-family home neighborhoods of Larimer Heights as they were in Waldenburg Acres; yet she stopped short of saying this. Gloria's representation of limitations some Waldenburg Acres parents had in responding to teacher bias was cloaked language for a situation that directly involved Gwen. She was removed from class for reading a novel under her desk during a teacher directed lesson. Silently reading a novel in class was one of Gwen's coping strategies when her anxiety was nearing panic stage. A teacher who did not understand this about Gwen kicked her out of class for her silent reading habit. Shortly thereafter, I answered a knock on my office door and found Gwen crying hysterically and hyperventilating due to the spike in her anxiety that being

removed from class had caused. She was embarrassed and felt prejudged by the teacher for her trailer park status because other kids misbehaved without being removed.

Gwen's behavior in school was connected to the way she was perceived due to her status of being a trailer park kid. She explained that when she was in the 6th grade it really started to matter where kids lived. In the 6th grade Gwen would get off the bus at the luxury apartments right behind Waldenburg Acres with a friend and walk home. She did this to hide where she lived, stating, "We were embarrassed about it because they would always make fun of us and stuff about it. They were talking so much crap about it." This bus route was still in place two years later, but Gwen no longer rides that bus. I was witness to the segregation on this bus where the trailer park kids sat together in the back, right in front them sat the luxury apartment kids, and nearest to the front of the bus sat the kids from a single-family home neighborhood. The contrast in neighborhoods was difficult for the trailer park kids to pretend they did not see. Gwen was smart enough to save herself from the ostracizing she experienced by getting off the bus at the luxury apartment stop. In this way, when she had to walk by the single-family home kids to exit the bus, she avoided being called "trailer trash" and other derogatory terms. This peculiar bus route, which only held 12 Waldenburg Acres students both days I rode it to and from school, was another incidence where Gloria advocated for her daughter:

Either way it was a nice, nice neighborhood and then they came here to pick up the kids and I'm like, I actually called the transportation department and I was like, do you understand kids that live in a trailer park that are going to school with kids that are in multi-million dollar houses shouldn't be picked up after the kids that live, they should be picked up first, you know, whichever direction it was, they're right next to it, it's not going to alter the bus route by any you know, stretch of the imagination because she did, she got, I actually had to switch her bus because

everybody was calling the kids that they'd picked up here trailer trash and it was only a select few kids for whatever reason that were put on the bus um...I was infuriated because it's like okay now everybody knows where she lives and she doesn't kind of stand a chance, you know, like with even just not people not knowing and judging her off of that before they know her and know, you know, um, so I was, I was mad.

The practice of filling one bus and having another bus to service a handful of Waldenburg Acres students, was still in place today.

Gwen's cunning moves after school were not much of a possibility during class time, but she found other ways to hide from the crowds when not in class. In the morning, instead of going to the cafeteria for breakfast, Gwen came to my classroom space, or she went to class early. During lunch, Gwen found alternative spots, whether it was one of my two classrooms, the classroom of a first-year teacher, or the Media Center, she worked any angle to avoid the cafeteria. Just like the bus situation, Gwen did not want to be perceived as a trailer park kid and there would be no way to circumvent this identity since the trailer park kids were segregated during lunch. She explained the cafeteria seating arrangement this way:

Gwen: Some people like, they don't like mixing with some people where they live. Like, tables wise, like, in the cafeteria, for example, there's one table that like nobody of lower class can like, sit there, like knowing where they live would sit there. I don't really know how to explain it. It's basically like all the high houses in the neighborhoods. They don't really like, it's just like who they don't think that fits in, like for example I mean um, there's like the trailer park kids that sit at a table and they're considered like the trash table like everybody, nobody likes sitting with them. Mostly just boys, but there are some girls. They split the table in half. Like, I know a bunch of kids that live in Waldenburg Acres and the kids in mansions, on the other hand. They're completely separate.

Me: They don't sit together at all?

Gwen: At all.

Gwen was living proof that you could spend all your energy in school dodging the label of being a trailer park kid. Her existence in school exhausted her.

For Gloria, the fundamental theme connected to trailer park living was the effect that “snap judgments” and the connected effect the negative stigma had on Gwen. She shared she did not think Gwen would necessarily lose friends because of where she lived, but it was more likely that she would not make friends because of where she lived. When I asked to what extent she believed the parents of single-family home students might restrict their children from making friends with students from Waldenburg Acres she responded:

Um, I would definitely say that parents weigh in on that um, more so than kids at this age. It starts, you know, that 6th grade, gets worse in 7th and 8th but um, I think parent’s perceptions of who their kids are around, you know, if my kid is hanging out with a kid in a trailer park they’re going to be doing drugs or they’re not going to be supervised or they’re going to be whatever, just doing whatever they want to do and so what do, you know, I think that that definitely has something to do with it, and then, I think you know, once kids have told them those kids are trashy they’re all going to be drug addicts and drug dealers or in jail, whatever pregnant at 16 it’s you know again the stigma. It’s just, it’s really attached.

The power of the negative stigma attached to the Waldenburg Acres community was a key factor in Gwen’s identity formation. In some ways the stigma was found to be detrimental to Gwen’s adolescent development and concept of self, and in other ways it propelled her to want to succeed academically to take her “sweet revenge” on teachers and students who she perceived as not believing in her. Gwen referenced her soon to be high school years by projecting:

Yeah, I’ve been called nothing all the time, like a lot, like kids are mean, but I didn’t care because when you show when you go through high school and on that graduation day and if you’re valedictorian or whatever [I can’t say that right]. I wanna, that’s like, that’s what I wanna do. When you’re sitting there all As you’re

going through everything and you're passing it, you're going to go to college, it's kind of like your sweet revenge, in a way. Cause you can like prove to yourself, like prove to everybody, that they were wrong.

Given her resilience, Gwen might achieve her vision of herself and prove to everybody that they were wrong.

Miguel Fernandez.

I've always thought bad of, just because you always hear trailer trash, and I always thought, like bad about trailer parks. I really did not want to move here. I don't even like telling people that I live in one because you know, when people think trailer, they think trailer trash.

(Meghan Walker, Personal Interview, 06/12/2017)

Miguel Fernandez was the youngest of Meghan Walker's three children. Miguel and his older brother and sister lived with Meghan and Miguel's father in Waldenburg Acres. The family moved there in 2014 when Meghan paid \$10,500 cash for their used, singlewide manufactured home. Prior to this time, Miguel and his family lived in a single-family home in the same school attendance area as Waldenburg Acres. The elderly woman Meghan worked for as her caregiver earning \$21.50 an hour owned their rental home. When the woman passed away, Meghan and her family were given one year to continue renting the home. The funds used to purchase the family home in Walsenburg Acres was left for Meghan by the elderly woman she was taking care of during the last years of her life.

When I first met Miguel, it was in the context of him being a student in the study skills class I supervise. Miguel had done poorly during his 6th grade school year and was scheduled in study skills for both his 7th and 8th grade school years. Miguel never improved enough

academically to exit the class and enroll in an elective course. He was an extremely likable young person who enjoyed building and fixing things. The curriculum Miguel was forced to endure did not address who he was as a young person. Miguel was a problem solver with skills that ranged from technology support to putting together locker shelves for others in study skills class. Meghan described her son as someone who cared about the feelings of others. I had seen great compassion for others emanate from Miguel. He refrained from engaging in negative talk about anyone. When others engaged in hurtful gossip, he was heard to steer their words towards kindness, or point out that there was probably another side to the story.

Miguel had dark, wavy hair that he typically grew out rather long and then cut it just shy of a buzz cut a couple of times per year. Once when I was sitting on the front lawn of the clubhouse talking with another student, I noticed a blur of a young man speeding by on a bike. From across the street I thought it was Miguel, but I was not certain. When Miguel's interview time arrived that day, so did Miguel with a fresh summer haircut. Miguel was resourceful in ways not typically recognized in school. He told me he rode his bike about a mile from his home to a local salon to get his haircut. This confirmed that it was Miguel I had seen flying by on his bike. He explained that he was riding at a fast speed because he did not know how busy the salon was and he wanted to be on time for his appointment with me. Miguel deeply connected with most people and human connection was a missing aspect in Kearney's formal curriculum.

The most striking physical feature of Miguel is his deep dark eyes framed by thick and long dark eyelashes. His charming personality made it easier to look past his unusually asymmetrical teeth, but middle schoolers could be cruel. Miguel was embarrassed about his teeth.

According to Meghan, he frequently talked about students at Kearney saying hurtful things about his teeth and that he wished they could be fixed. In Miguel's defense, Gwen shared with me how mean she thought it was that students at Kearney had teased Miguel about his teeth. They whispered, within earshot of Gwen, that he probably did not have enough money to fix his teeth. I found out through Meghan that Miguel's dentist was working to see if Medicaid will pay for the dental work since it affects Miguel in ways that exceed cosmetic.

Meghan was focused on parenting her children differently from how she was parented. She remembers when she became pregnant with her oldest son at age 18. She was determined to provide more physical and emotional stability for her unborn child than she experienced as a child stating, "When I got pregnant with Rodrigo I just said there's no way that I'll raise my kids like I was raised." Meghan remembered being nine years old and allowed to eat as much watermelon as she wanted at a family reunion. The watermelon was spiked with Tequila. Meghan reported that memory as her first time being drunk. Another early memory included Meghan sneaking out of bed and lying behind the couch when her parents were having parties so that she could smell the pot, a smell that was pleasing to her:

I was always, I don't know just a bad kid just a really bad kid. I remember like being a little kid and like my parents would be having parties and they'd put us in our rooms and I'd come out and lay right next to the couch just to smell them smoking pot. Like I loved it. And after they'd get all drunk I'd come out and you know, I was like entertaining their party, you know. I was always a different kind of kid.

Meghan mentioned the drug use in Waldenburg Acres much more than any other participant, and she mentioned it with certainty. Meghan was positive in her ability to pick out the drug houses in

Waldenburg Acres. She shared that her oldest son, Rodrigo, who graduated from high school in 2017, confirmed her positivity. In having broken free from her former lifestyle, which included the use of drugs and alcohol, Meghan steered clear of the drugs in Waldenburg Acres and assured her children would never go anywhere near such homes, “or we’re going to have a problem.”

Perhaps the drug dealing and drug use by what Meghan claimed at least half of the adults in Waldenburg Acres were one reason why she kept to herself. She selected to buy a home in Waldenburg Acres so that her children could stay in the Larimer Heights School District:

When I got that money, I bought this place and it’s the only thing I could afford out here and it was important that I kept my kids in the same school because I grew up going to like, I went to 13 different elementary schools, so I did not want my kids moving, you know, and we weren’t going back to ---- [a nearby urban area]. That’s where we came from.

All major life decisions Meghan made were in trying to create a better life for her children than she experienced as a child. Her choice to live in Waldenburg Acres was because she wanted her children to experience the stability and continuity that she never had as a child. Even her choice to stay with Miguel’s father came from reminiscing about her parent’s divorce and how her family was split down the middle at that time. Meghan stayed with Miguel’s father to avoid complicating the lives of her children. Her two older children were from a different relationship that ended when their father was deported. After being together for years, Meghan’s older children claimed Miguel’s father as their own. Meghan referenced her relationship with Miguel’s father:

I kind of, I don’t know. I messed up when I was younger and I just stayed with him because I wanted my kids to have their parent, you know. I didn’t want to screw up, you know, all three of their lives and struggle and you know, we struggled even...

Miguel's father was an illegal immigrant, which caused Miguel constant fear that his father could be sent back to Mexico. Miguel's family lacked the application funds needed to begin the process of becoming a legalized citizen.

The family had always struggled financially. The bleakest financial time was when Miguel was a baby and they lived in their truck for two weeks during the winter. From there they stayed in a foreclosed home that belonged to Meghan's friend. When the bank took the home back, Miguel and his family moved to a nearby urban area, where Meghan said she would never return. The next residence was the rental home, and then Waldenburg Acres. Miguel's early life was one of frequent transitions and family financial strain. He had lived in five different locations by the time he was in pre-school. When work was available, Miguel's father did dry wall. Meghan worked from 7-10 in the evenings as an in-home caregiver.

Meghan had reached success in parenting her children differently than how she was parented. Meghan's children were committed to her well being. Miguel expressed his plans to have some property with a little place where his mom can live. Meghan felt bad that her oldest son brought her home special lunches as an occasional surprise. She wished she had the funds to buy lunch for her son. The children were supportive of each other. Meghan's children did their own laundry and chores, like doing the dishes or cleaning bathrooms. They sometimes traded chores with one another, or pitched in and helped each other.

Meghan was apologetic about her inability to assist Miguel with homework:

And that's the one thing I don't get, like I don't, you know, I don't have patience you know, to sit and try to help him with something I don't even know what he is doing, but like his brother, his sister, they'll help him like he just doesn't want to do

it...the best that I graduated high school with a, ah, 5th grade reading level. I didn't get to learn. I went to so many schools and I was socially promoted all through school.

Being socially promoted all through school explained why Meghan was unable to assist Miguel.

Reports of Miguel being able to rely on his siblings were inconsistent between his mother's perception and his experience. Sometimes Miguel's siblings had difficulty remembering how to do what Miguel needed help with:

My parents can't really help me because like my mom she doesn't really remember any of the stuff. It's usually like my brother or my sister that helps me and my brother usually doesn't remember the stuff either. I don't know, and then she like usually it's math that I usually need help on, but my sister is not the best at math.

Miguel struggled academically. His difficulties in school were connected to time management at home and missing assignments. His forgetfulness caused him to neglect taking home what he needed to complete his homework. Throughout middle school, Miguel repeatedly fell behind and was overwhelmed with the homework expectations of teachers. Typically, it was impossible for Miguel to complete all of his missing work before grades were due. Teachers were generous in extending due dates right up until the last day of each marking period. When Miguel did take his work home, he rarely completed any of it.

An example that helped illustrate the work habits of Miguel happened with his last English Language Arts project of the year. Students at Kearny were expected to always be reading independently for pleasure. In the 8th grade, quarterly book reports were an event that showcased applications of what was learned in class to independent reading habits. Miguel struggled with this because he did not like to read. He became a master at avoiding accountability for his independent

reading by faking book reports from books that had been read to him by past teachers. Miguel read just enough to refresh his memory and turned in book reports past their due dates. For the last book report, worth 60 points, students were asked to create a poster outlining the literary elements in the most recent novel they had read. Miguel was behind in his English Language Arts project, he had just turned in his math project 17 days late and he had a history project that was late. In addition, while listening to his science teacher direct another student to clean out their science binder, Miguel threw out all the contents of his science binder thinking that he did not need it. Miguel had to start over and do all the work from the science unit he had mistakenly thrown away.

Miguel used a faulty logic to explain why he avoided completing class projects, “Either that it’s going to like get my grade down if I don’t do well, or if I forget to do it it’s going to get my grade down too.” By not doing well on a project it was still worth more points than by not doing the project. The delay of this English Language Arts project could be linked back to the following attempts by Miguel to read a novel from start to finish:

Because I didn’t have my book yet. I had a book but then like I was trying to find my, this other book cause I wanted to do the Shadow Club Rising, but I couldn’t find it anywhere. So then, I was reading this other book, but I didn’t really like it that much so I switched to Wonder. We got it read to us in 5th grade and I liked it a lot.

The pattern of falling behind in schoolwork was demonstrated by every one of the 8th grade participants in this study, but for Miguel reasons were connected to a combination of a diagnosis of ADHD at the very end of his 8th grade school year and his view of school. In addition to describing himself as having a “terrible memory” in organizing his schoolwork, Miguel’s view of school lacked promise of achieving high marks and staying in the academic track in high school.

Like his older brother, Miguel could attend the technological school when he is in his junior and senior years. A specific grade point was required for admission at the technological campus. The hope for Miguel was that with his recent diagnosis and medical intervention, he could begin to achieve in school. If Miguel's academic state does not improve he could not be accepted at the technological school and had a high likelihood of attending the Larimer Heights alternative high school. For Miguel, curriculum alienation was a pressing concern, knowing what was likely to unfold in his future school experience. Seeing his friends at school was the most crucial component of school for Miguel, "I don't really like school, but I get why we have to go to school. Like I don't know it's not a thing that I like to go to cause I'd rather just be with my friends."

Most trailer park kids found back-to-back projects, across different content areas, too fast paced. Students like Miguel, who must be totally independent in his schoolwork, found the academic demands at Kearney challenging. When asked if it was difficult for him to keep up with the workload in school, Miguel replied:

Yes. And like that, like going along with that is how many projects we had from different teachers at the same times, sometimes. Like some teachers would do back-to-back projects, like they would give us a little time, but there'd still be like close so if we didn't get to finish one of those it would be hard to finish because we're trying to work on the other one.

Even with his study skills class Miguel was unable to keep up with schoolwork.

Miguel enjoyed living in Waldenburg Acres more than any other student participant. His core group of friends (six Mexican-American males his age) already lived in Waldenburg Acres when his family moved there. The closeness of the homes and the seclusion of the neighborhood were two things that Miguel really appreciated because he could get to the homes of his friends

faster and without relying on his mother to drive him. He also felt that Meghan allowed him more freedom than she did when they lived in their rental home. He attributed his freedom to Meghan knowing all the places he could possibly be in the trailer park:

I guess just cause like it's a smaller place so like there's not that much places to go and like I'll still ask my mom to go places and like she's like will let me go more places just cause like there's closer places there, like the basketball court and stuff like that. Plus the houses are close together so then like you don't gotta like get drove to someone's house just to hang out with them.

According to Miguel, the move to Waldenburg Acres was a positive move. He now lived closer to his friends and he had more access to spend time with his friends after school. Miguel and his friends enjoyed the basketball court, the swimming pool, state park that had a soccer field, and walking around the neighborhood. One of Miguel's favorite pastimes was walking around downtown Larimer Heights, which was a two-mile walk from his home. He explained that when he went there with his friends they walk around, go in the stores, and might get something to eat if they have money.

Miguel had never participated in any organized activities until this past school year. He played on the 8th grade football team through a school scholarship program. He liked being on the football team and was looking forward to playing football in high school. During my field work this past summer; I learned that Charlie Davis was already participating in conditioning sessions once or twice per-day with his freshman teammates and coaches at the high school. When I asked Miguel about this he said that he thought he had to wait until the fall to sign-up. He was unaware of a communication network alerting the team about summer conditioning in readying for the upcoming fall football season. Charlie's friends told him when the conditioning sessions started.

The advantages afforded through the networks that Charlie was forming with students of families with different social and cultural capital could be escaping students like Miguel.

Miguel recognized many of the same frustrations with the overall aesthetics of Waldenburg Acres as some of the adults in this study. He struggled with enjoying living there and his feelings that “it is like, a little embarrassing.” I asked him what was embarrassing, he replied:

I don't know cause usually when people think of a trailer park it's kind of like, like they usually think it's going to be like crappy or something. People when they look at, it's like don't judge people on the outside. When you're looking at the outside, the outside is like terrible looking, but when you go into some trailers they're actually really nice looking.

Like Isla and Gwen, Miguel was intentional by not mentioning where he lived while at school. Whereas Isla felt it was not “relevant” that her peers knew where she lived, and Gwen had lost friendships over revealing where she lived, Miguel was torn between being embarrassed and not caring what other people thought about where he lived. He stated, “Sometimes I would rather people, rather people not know that I live there just cause it's a little bit embarrassing, but usually I don't really care.”

His belief that people could think he was poor if they knew where he lived was what kept Miguel and other trailer park kids functioning at school under a *need to know* basis. Miguel resisted and hid from the label of being poor. At the same time, he observed the difference between living in Waldenburg Acres and when he lived in a single-family home as expectations that differed for communities based on outside perceptions. According to Miguel, *expectations* are connected to the suspected drug usage in Waldenburg Acres. Miguel pointed out that the people who did drugs were not exclusively the people who lived in the trailer park. He knew that outsiders came to the

Waldenburg Acres to partake in the illegal drug activity. Miguel shared that when he was outside he would sometimes be asked where “Big Bill” lived by strangers in their cars. Miguel explained what he meant by expectations. His concern and worry was teachers will expect because a Waldenburg Acres student might be known to use drugs, teachers would assume that Miguel and other trailer park kids use drugs. Miguel believed trailer park residents bared the total brunt of the illegal drug use and dealing in their city.

Miguel had an impressive amount of knowledge when it came to athletic shoes. For the males at Kearney, having more than a few pairs of expensive shoes elevated status among peers. The topic of shoes surfaced in the context of Miguel answering the question, “What makes someone rich?”

I don't know. I feel like there's a difference between like rich and then, like I don't know. Doing good like people that are like can like support their family and have like a little bit more that's like doing good and everything. Like rich I guess that's like, I don't know, having too much I guess, like, like people that have like six pairs of shoes or more, and like a lot of, I don't know, like a lot of shirts, pants and everything, like a lot more than I needed.

Miguel hinted at his perception that his family is doing “good” because they have what they need. Recognition that some students might have six pairs of shoes or more struck Miguel as the dividing line between doing good and being rich. According to Miguel, the amount and type of shoes the males had at Kearney was not the only factor in knowing who was rich. Three factors, named by Miguel, were indicators of the difference between students from rich families and students from “doing good” families: (a) the number of shoes you have, (b) the type of shoes you have, and (c) “you can kinda tell like where they live and everything.”

Tracking who had new shoes, expensive shoes, or a lot of shoes happened when students noticed that their peers were “wearing like a different pair like each day.” When Miguel referenced a student who had Gucci flip-flops, this opened the door to inquire exactly how much money did middle school males spend on their shoes that I discovered it was from twelve hundred dollars to ninety dollars:

It kind of matters like, what kind of Jordan’s you get though. These like OVOs, it’s like Drake and Jordan, they’re like twelve hundred dollars and then there’s like regular like I have is like ninety dollars. But like there’s different types of Jordan’s. It’s like something, ah, it’s like Flight Crew and then there’s like the actual Jordan’s, which are like the really expensive shoes.

The act of trailer park family members pooling their money to obtain clothing and shoes close to what the single-family home kids wear was common. Miguel had a pair of Jordan’s that his sister wanted to buy for him for Christmas last year. Miguel did not want her paying the entire sixty dollars for the shoes they found on sale, so he paid for half of the shoes. His freshman sister paid her half with the tips she made at her waitress job downtown.

Miguel had dreams of owning his own shop one day where he could customize and fix cars. Along with his cousin, they were dreaming up a plan of their future lives as small business owners where they can employ other family members. Right after high school Miguel planned to take a year off and save some money before going to a community college. He believed that to obtain success in life you must work hard and he believed that hard work is the only way.

This chapter presented the uniqueness of the lives of the trailer park kids and their parents. Inclusion of such a large amount of data as an introduction to lives that have been misrepresented by others in the school and larger community was decided upon for three reasons. First,

presentation of life stories prior to deeper analysis promoted likelihood readers might recognize the nuanced ways in which the residents of Waldenburg Acres interpreted their marginalized status. Second, the experiences of the trailer park kids and their parents were shared in forms that revealed their voices, which were frequently silenced in other contexts. Third, by hearing life stories, there could be a chance that some readers may recognize their own bias when thinking about people who live in trailer parks. Chapter Five could not possibly analyze all that was included in Chapter Four. Selections of what to include in analysis were limited to the core group of research participants, the trailer park kids. A few portions of Chapter Five included data from interviews, field notes and my research journal that were not included in Chapter Four. Placement of relevant data in Chapter Five, assisted in claims made and implications discussed in Chapter Six. Four Kearney teachers add to the analysis to assist in understanding their core role in identity formation, resistance, and social reproduction as it pertained to the trailer park kids.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

*I wonder why there's the fear when they don't want to be exposed.
Just let me fly under the radar.*

(Personal Interview, Mrs. Bateman, 8/7/2017)

The perspectives of four teachers from Kearney are presented in this chapter. Their placement after the life stories of the trailer park kids assists in understanding analysis of intersections between home and school. The lives of the trailer park kids within their home community emerged as an important component of this work. Many connections were found between living in the Waldenburg Acres community and their lives in school. Before entering the analysis and findings, I introduce four teachers who were interviewed and appeared in my field notes.

The teacher participants' pseudonyms are Mrs. Bateman, Mrs. Lovell, Mr. Haines, and Mr. Campbell. They are four long-standing Kearney teachers with a range of teaching experience at Kearney from 23 years to 30 years. All teacher participants were *highly effective* on the Michigan teacher evaluation system, respected among colleagues, and well liked by the Kearney parent community. The four teachers had experience teaching various content areas before highly qualified teacher requirements went into effect in Michigan. Now, they teach their college education content majors. Consistent to the proportionality of the student participants, one 6th grade teacher participant, one 7th grade teacher, and two 8th grade teachers were included.

The perceptions that the four teachers had regarding differences in life worlds between students from Waldenburg Acres and more economically advantaged students were substantial. Differences in social and cultural capital among Kearney students required viewing the trailer park kids as something that needed to be fixed because of their perceived home lives. Teachers

presented the structural inequities in school through a lens of personal qualities that they perceived contributed to disparities for the trailer park kids and their parents.

In the 2003-2004 academic year, Larimer Heights Schools presented a professional development series that examined social class and connectedness to school. “A Framework for Understanding Poverty,” by Payne (1996) was the anchor text for teacher learning. Many schools in the Larimer Heights School District bought the book for teachers and held book clubs within their schools. Professional development workshops followed, resulting in further stigmatizing the trailer park kids. The professional development series based on Payne’s premise built stereotypes in teachers and resulted in teachers believing that cultural traits existed within social class status (Boomer, Dworin, May & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2008, 2013). After reading Payne, a belief in the *culture of poverty* was solidified among some teachers in the district. Gorman (as cited in Gorski, 2008, 2013) identified *in-group bias* as beliefs to which groups adhere based on inaccurate facts due to wanting to align themselves with more favorable groups. Some teacher contributions in this chapter may resemble in-group bias and may be residual effects on teacher perspective from that professional development era.

The teachers at Kearney aligned themselves to the middle-and upper-middle class students, but they may have had more in common with the trailer park kids. The divide in cultural capital between the trailer park kids and their more economically advantaged peers was similar to the divide the teachers live with in educating students beyond their cultural capital means. Of the four teacher participants, three were from families where neither of their parents earned a college degree. Their class histories and current social class status might be closer to the students from Waldenburg Acres than the wealthiest layer of students at Kearney. Mr. Campbell, when asked

about resistance behaviors of the 8th graders from Waldenburg Acres responded by drawing a parallel to the trailer park kids perceptions with his own life experience:

I think it's a little bit of cynicism. I think they're a little bit, I don't know if jaded is the right word, maybe upset that they're in that situation. I think it, it's all relative. Even though you and I, we know teachers' salaries aren't that great, when I live in a neighborhood where there's a lot of engineers and things like that, you know. They have a company come and replace their windows and I do it myself, you know, so I, I it's on a very small scale, but I understand where the jadedness, you know, can come from. So, I understand they're guarded or they're a little upset, you know. Why is this me? You know why am I not, a little bit of a chip on their shoulder.

Mr. Haines and Mrs. Lovell shared similar sentiments when talking about trips or vacation homes of some of the single-family home kids. Mrs. Bateman, whose economic status was similar to many of the single-family home kids, was shocked the day a student of hers phoned his family butler to bring pizza to the school for her class.

The similarities in leisure time activities experienced by the trailer park kids and their teachers when they were young presented conflicting perspectives. Leisure time for both groups paralleled *accomplishment of natural growth* (Lareau, 2000, 2011). Activities included freedom and independence to explore their neighborhood by making up their own games, sitting by the fire pit, and riding bikes, unsupervised by adults. The teachers viewed such leisure behaviors as placing the trailer park kids at a disadvantage in school and some interpreted it as absentee parenting. In their childhoods, such freedoms were viewed as the absolute best way to grow up because nobody was holding their hand through life.

Identity Formation

So, the kids in here, like they reflect from being like, made fun of and stuff, so they reflect. They're being made fun of so they're like okay, if you're just going to say this about me; I'm going to become it.

(Personal Interview, Gwen Radcliff, 6/30/2017)

In classroom settings, single-family home students were recognized as having developed *multiple roles* throughout their young lives (Goffman as cited in Scott, 2015). Opportunities for displaying various roles occurred during teacher/student conversations before lessons, congratulatory messages on the PA system, and in emails circulated about recent single-family home students' accolades. Due to their residential status, a singular role was assigned to trailer park kids. An excerpt from my field notes journal demonstrated the acquisition of differing roles for the single-family home kids at Kearney Middle School who were destined to become portfolio people (Gee, 2000):

As the students filed in, the teacher talked with a male student about his weekend. The point was to find out the weekend golf scores of the student. The teacher was in awe of his golfing talent and followed up with "I didn't even know what a golf course was when I was your age." A few students chimed in with golf stories of their own including the alligators on golf courses in Florida. A few girls talked about their escapades at country club pools. With that the teacher transitioned to the lesson for the day. I wondered how Alice received this sharing of life stories. She smiled and half-laughed with the rest of the class, but did not contribute to the conversation.

In moments like these, Alice continued to learn that some of her peers at Kearney had life worlds that were unfamiliar to her. Opening class like this was common at Kearney and it was a key time for many of the trailer park kids to be reminded of their insular world. Many single-family home students practiced role switching through their various memberships as part of the elite student group. Alice could have shared the same stories she shared with me about her escapades at the Waldenburg Acres swimming pool, but she did not. In the spring of her 6th grade school year, she had learned to be silent about her life (Fine, 1987, 2003). For the trailer park kids, their assigned role was perceived as one-dimensional (Gee, 2000; Goffman as cited in Scott, 2015). Miguel and Gwen exposed the pre-determined role assignment of the trailer park kids by others in the following way:

Miguel: I think the main difference is expectations, kind of.

Me: Okay, what do you mean by that?

Miguel: Cause like here, it's like, it's like more of a poor community so like ah, people don't have like high expectations of some people here, and like more richer places or wherever like most likely they're going to have high expectations and everything.

Me: Can you describe to me what you mean by high expectations? In what areas are you talking about?

Gwen: You know, like Brenda (pseudonym) for example and then, us. So Brenda, for example, they expect her, since she has such a big house, to be like in like, she's like a, she's a nice girl with fancy clothes, she has a nice phone and she's like is a really nice girl, cause like she's trying to act ghetto, but she's not really bad-

Me: Oh, she's a nice girl that's trying to act ghetto?

Miguel: It's not really. It's more of like she hangs out with like more of the people that like live here and stuff like that.

Gwen: Yes and like but at the same time I'm just saying like expectations from people to like us. They expect her to like be like nice and everything like, like phone and then here they expect like girls, for example to be like acting like, I'm trying to put this in a way, like a hood, like they expect girls here to be like wearing like I don't know, like basketball shorts.

Miguel: I don't know about that, like it's just your personality.

Gwen: Yeah, they expect-

Miguel: You to be like rude and like um,

Gwen: Yeah, trashy.

Roles of being trashy and possessing lower expectations were recognized by the trailer park kids as perceptions they knew existed, but they rejected the defining terms. Brenda caused confusion in the minds of students because her connections to the trailer park kids challenged her role assignment as being more of a portfolio person (Gee, 2000). Miguel did not agree with what he perceived as Gwen overreaching in her use of the word *ghetto* and her inclusion of the word

hood and *basketball shorts*. Miguel simplified Gwen's perceptions of the trailer park kids defined role as lower expectations for them and rude behavior from them. Gwen suggested that the stigma associated with living in Waldenburg Acres might be more connected to *ghetto* than Miguel admitted.

In opposition to their assigned role, the trailer parks kids were found to live multi-dimensional lives. Miguel was resourceful and independent enough to ride his bike, at least one mile from his home, to get his own haircut. Not appearing in Chapter Four, but relevant here, Gwen obtained her working permit at the age of 14 and was working as a waitress at a downtown casual dining establishment, while attending school. She arranged her own rides too and from work when Gloria was unavailable. Charlie took on a fatherly role to his much younger adopted uncle stating, "I have to teach him things. I'm kind of like a father figure to him." And David, who possessed similar cultural capital as some of the single-family home kids, selected to keep his friendship group limited to trailer park kids because he saw beyond the harsh judgments the trailer park kids, including himself, lived with daily. If teachers had more time to get to know the multi-dimensional lives of the trailer park kids, they may have been astonished at the impressive complexities with which they lived. Overshadowing these possibilities was the depth of the single-family home kids' power in the school. Their lives were attended to because they spoke freely and loudly about their advantage. Some teachers worked to circumvent their power, which is discussed in the section on resistance.

Exclusion

The *culture of power* (Delpit, 1988, 1995) at Kearney was primarily enacted through the social exclusion practices of the single-family home kids. Students from more economically advantaged families held more power in the school. Life worlds of the trailer park kids were

silenced and misinterpreted in classrooms. An excerpt from my field notes journal demonstrated the silencing:

Working in groups of four, one girl spent time folding a flower from a Kleenex box so it was the next Kleenex to be pulled from the box. She held up the box and said, “Mr. Haines, look. Our housekeeper used to do this to all of our Kleenex boxes. She was the best housekeeper we ever had. She was so awesome.” Mr. Haines responded, “Oh, I can’t believe you made that.” In this group I recognized one girl who lives in the trailer park. For the rest of the hour she sat with her group. She contributed to the group by coloring what she was told to color.

When I shared this observation with Mrs. Lovell, she responded:

Her mom’s probably a housekeeper. I think that, your high-end kids, this is the only life they’ve ever known. She wasn’t doing it to be mean. That’s her normal, it’s her normal, that’s her normal. Yeah, right. The trailer park kids are going, that’s only in the movies, you people exist?

Saying it’s the only life some single-family home kids have ever known was an honest account, but it did not address the power and advantage within that account. All teachers made reference to the innocence with which the single-family home kids talked openly about their life worlds at school. By claiming innocence behind their stories, teachers did not recognize ways in which they and the trailer park kids had learned to be subservient to the wealth of students explained below:

It’s the self-preservation of the teacher because you know this parent will wait a day or two. This one if you don’t answer on that day is going to go above you and sometimes they skip the principal and go right to the board office (Mrs. Lovell).

The professional identity of teachers was grounded in teaching middle-and upper-middle class students in the same way that some parents of the trailer park kids grounded their identity in being able to access residency in Larimer Heights. Both groups preferred being positioned closer to economic privilege, even if their circumstance occupied a lesser status. At the same time teachers expressed distaste at the wealth of some students by using descriptive terms like “snotty”, they often were in awe of the wealth status of some of their students. Mr. Haines used terms like, “it just rolls off their tongue” when describing the weekend trips when single-family home students

were flown to “Texas or whatever” for a quick getaway. Adherence to being subservient to the wealth status of students resulted in professional frustrations; yet teachers continued to defend displays of privilege as innocent (Freire, 1970). Similarly, parents of the trailer park kids were proud to have accessed residency in Larimer Heights, even if they were locked out of enjoying some of the more expensive amenities. Comments frequently made like “This is Larimer for Pete’s sake,” by Lucy Mason, lets us know that residence in an upscale community mattered to most parent participants. These findings suggested teachers and trailer park kids were both positioned outside the culture of power (Delpit, 1995). This created a potential alliance between the two groups based on teacher sympathy for the trailer park kids steeped in the deficit perspective (Eisner, 1995).

The students from Waldenburg Acres were frequently described by teachers as “please do not call attention to me, just let me fly under the radar” (Mrs. Bateman). How could a particular group of young people, who were so vibrant and alive in their home community, be so silent at school? Behaviors with such a dramatic swing might indicate living a marginalized status in school. Imagine spending your entire school day trying to hide where you live. The trailer park kids learned when they could talk and when to be silent:

It’s the 100\$ T-Shirt. It’s ridiculous. They wear it like a badge and it shows that they have money and um, that’s where it goes back to a lot of your kids from the park, the trailer park, that’s where they’re quiet. They’re learning just stay clamed up. (Mr. Haines)

I feel like the kids in the trailer park are much more timid, very quiet, timid, probably much more afraid to make a mistake. Um, I get a sense sometimes they don’t want attention brought to them. If they can hide and fit in and not have attention brought to them, I see very timid, because I think they’re afraid of being exposed. They don’t want the other kids to know who they are and if I fly under that radar, who needs to know? (Mrs. Bateman)

I think some of the kids feel lost, the Acres kids...some of them are quieter, like they don’t ever want you to know they live in the Acres. They’ll do anything they

can to fit in. When we, the bus list, you know, at the beginning of the year, what bus are you on? “I know, don’t tell me what bus I’m on, I already know.” They just want to be seen like everybody else. (Mrs. Lovell)

You know the kids from the trailer park, they’ll do anything they can to try to hide it. (Mr. Campbell)

The marginalization experienced by the trailer park kids could be seen on their faces, especially, when in class without a peer from their neighborhood. With no one to talk to, the trailer park kids sat in silence and looked as if they wanted to disappear. Teachers interpreted their silencing as personal qualities of being quiet and timid. The trailer park kids genuinely liked most of their teachers, but were hesitant to share their feelings during the school day with teachers, fearing it would add to negative judgments for being a trailer park kid. Of all the groups and adults in the school, the trailer park kids appeared to have the most sophisticated and nuanced understanding of group dynamics in the school. This sophistication went so far as to many of them understanding the expectancy behaviors that some of the peers from their neighborhood adhered to. When Gwen stated “...okay, if you’re just going to say this about me, I’m going to become it,” she was analyzing the at risk behaviors of some trailer park kids in relation to meeting the expectations of others.

The trailer park kids were aware that they did not fit in socially at Kearney. Most trailer park kids moved quickly through the hallways and sat quietly in class. They never questioned teachers. Especially, when teachers excluded them. During one classroom observation of Miguel, he was relegated to a table at the front of his math class. An excerpt from my research journal states:

I still don’t know why Miguel was seated at the front table, perpendicular to the rest of the class during the lesson. He followed along by taking notes, but I could tell he did not understand what was being taught. Thinking he must have misbehaved, I asked Miguel later in the day why he was seated up front, away from the class. He said he did not know why. He did not want to ask his teacher why. He

explained, “I don’t know. When I walked in Mr. --- just said, Miguel you’re up here today.” So I sat there. Perhaps his teacher thought that if he were closer to instruction he would understand, but I doubt it. At the end of class a likely reason became apparent. It appeared to be to call him out for not having his homework completed, which the teacher did in a sarcastically teasing way, which made Miguel smile. He really likes his math teacher.

In addition to exclusion within the classroom by both teacher and single-family home kids, a familiar routine became seeing trailer park kids repeatedly exiled to the hallway and among others who had to finish up assignments.

The most common behavior observed among all the trailer park kids was the swiftness with which they exited the school to get on the bus to go home. Knowing the back seats were reserved for 8th graders made me wonder, why the rush? The idea that most of them felt that school was “okay” and some expressed the feeling of being safe in the trailer park made the quick exit from the building more plausible as an escape from their marginalized status in school. On the bus, they were themselves and were released from the silencing. More will be discussed on the bus rides later, but for now it suffices to say they were celebratory in being able to talk freely and be themselves on the bus.

The trailer park kids were socially isolated at Kearney Middle School. By the 7th and 8th grades, they had developed an adept ability to partner with teachers in an unspoken code assisting them in hiding where they lived. Fully hiding where they lived was an attempt to avoid social isolation by others. When Gloria Radcliff became upset about other students knowing Gwen lived in the trailer park because of the bus she rode, her words, “Now she doesn’t stand a chance,” assists in understanding the social repercussions of others knowing who lived in the trailer park. Social isolation steadily increased in intensity between the 6th and 8th grades. For some, when the possibility of never fitting in surfaced half way through the 6th grade school year, participation in

hiding where they lived became an attempt at survival in school. From the second semester of 6th grade onward, friendships for the trailer park kids increasingly became limited to only those students from inside the trailer park.

Some parents practiced the same behaviors within their neighborhood by which their children were marginalized in school. By calling attention to the lifestyles and home appearance of their neighbors, Waldenburg Acres parents frequently *othered each other*. Denise Worshum exhibited this with honesty when she said, “So, I’m guilty of it too.” The same isolation experienced by their children in school was part of their home experience. The trailer park parents exercised their discriminatory powers by deciding who, among their neighbors, was worthy of their time and attention, much like the single-family home parents behaved towards them. At home and at school, the trailer park kids experienced results of their parents adhering to marginalization by participating themselves (Freire, 1970). Lucy Mason was clear in her advice to Charlie, “You want to be in a group that is doing something with their lives.” Lucy, and many trailer park parents, felt that the other trailer park kids were not of the same caliber as their own children. At school, the trailer park kids social group was determined for them *through rejection by others* and at home their social group was determined for them by *their parents’ rejection of others*. Determination of their children’s friends from the neighborhood was largely filtered by whether the children were viewed to be properly supervised.

After the 6th grade experience determined their socially isolated status at Kearney, the trailer park kids learned how to avoid social groups with whom they did not want to cross paths. The single-family home kids treated the trailer park kids as if they were invisible. The trailer park kids responded by trying to appear invisible. Many, like Angela, found unoccupied areas in the

school to congregate and arrived in class early to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of being viewed as different while in the hallways.

Systemic marginalization at Kearney was blamed on the trailer park kids' personality traits. Exclusion in Kearney classrooms resulted from the silencing of the trailer park kids. Teachers allied with the trailer park kids to hide where they lived. The teachers viewed their alliance as protective and affectionate. In a way, the silent alliance between trailer park kids and teachers was a stand against the culture of power (Delpit, 1988,1995). For the trailer park kids, partnering with teachers in hiding their residence may have been received as teachers recognizing and participating in their marginalized status. Social isolation at Kearney happened with increasing intensity as students became aware of where their friends and acquaintances in school lived.

Curriculum Alienation

Curriculum alienation experienced by the trailer park kids fell into three contributing categories: (a) the state sponsored curriculum, (b) the assignment of projects, and (c) full inclusion group work. The teachers at Kearney Middle School upset the myth of the state sponsored non-neutral curriculum in place at the school in ways that further marginalized the trailer park kids. Teacher stereotyping of the trailer park kids was presented as frustrations with the curriculum. Routinely, teachers discussed their frustrations with the district strategic plan that they felt overlooked other life possibilities for low-income students: *Strategic Plan 2020 will ensure that all students attending Larimer Heights Schools will be focused on the goal of becoming "college ready, career ready and life ready."* In the words of Mr. Campbell, "You can say that I think at the top of the website, every kid college ready, career ready, we're dropping the ball." When asked where at? He replied:

The Acres kids. The kids that should be in tech programs, you know. Why is the state of Michigan making kids take Spanish, or take a foreign language for two

years? This kid could be a welder. Teach him. Let him work with his hands. Who cares if he can speak Spanish? It's not a life indicator that these kids, we have put every kid in the stinking college box. Kids that don't go to college make more money than I do.

Although meant to be supportive of trailer park kids, the claim by Mr. Campbell that students from the Acres were more prone to working with their hands than learning Spanish could be damaging. It reinforced stereotypes and grouped students into a collective existence. It assumed *they are a product of their environment* in ways that insinuated their home environments were not prone for academic success in the current curriculum offerings. The focus of dysfunction was primarily with the state that forces future welders, who live in trailer parks, to take Spanish. The second primary dysfunction was that students were not capable of learning Spanish because they live in a trailer park. Interesting here is that David, Alice, John, Isla, Gwen and Charlie all knew that their home expectation was a college education. Angela and Miguel were offered more free choice to decide their future educational or career paths.

Moreover, while teachers recognized non-neutral state curriculum, they recognized it through the lens of what was missing that could track students, like the trailer park kids, into a non-academic track. Teachers' frequently referenced ideas like "we're expecting them to learn all this math that they may never need, when they could be an amazing artist" (Mrs. Lovell). The teacher perception was that most trailer park kids were incapable of participating in academics due to their life worlds and their parent's perceived inability to help them at home. Mr. Campbell explained further where he believed we were "dropping the ball" with the trailer park kids:

We're so focused on what a kid can't do and trying to make what a kid can't do better; rather than focus on what a kid can do and extenuating on that. It just bothers me, not that we shouldn't have high standards for the kids that live in the Acres, we should have just as high standards, but why can't we send them down a different road and if they belong on the college road, we put them on the college road, but not all of them do. Based on extenuating circumstances, but dog gone it, a kid can

learn to be a welder or an electrician takes a ton of school, or a carpenter, um, they ah, an appliance repair man, a plumber.

Few people would argue against focusing on the talents and interests of students, with many agreeing that not all kids belong *on the college road* and that *all* kids should have high standards. Where the unsubstantiated stereotype enters is the coded language *based on extenuating circumstance*. The translation may mean due to the conditions of home lives, most trailer park kids are not college material. Not only does this interpretation ignore the college desires alive in the homes of many trailer park kids, it also is far from understanding the advantage of having the types of capital accepted by middle- and upper-middle class schools (Bourdieu, 187, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976)

Learning about the history of social class struggles in America was missing in the official school curriculum at Kearney. In the 8th grade, United States history taught the cause and effect of wars, the wars themselves, and what happened afterward that influenced the development of the United States. For example, Shay's Rebellion was taught from the perspective of its impact on the building of a stronger national government and paid little attention to the life conditions of farmers who lead the rebellion. Bridges to multiple life worlds could have been built by exploration of such historical events from multiple perspectives.

Incidental classroom opportunities for discussing the grouping of adolescents by social class and the different treatment of such groups by others were missed. During a field observation of Angela, the teacher was reading *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967) to students. The teacher led discussion about the reading focused on how difficult life was for the Socs (upper-class) and that the Greasers (working-class) did not understand the pressures that kids who appeared to have everything in life, had to live with. Angela interpreted her understanding in the following way:

Well, when we were reading it I think like the Greasers is the kid who live in like, the smaller houses and the Soc is the kids that live in the bigger houses and like the conflicts between them.

Curriculum alienation was experienced by presenting 8th grade literature from one perspective. Emphasis on the pressures of being born in economic privilege included the inability of low-income people to understand such pressures. The trailer parks kids may have interpreted these lessons as being about their deficits, including the inability to be sympathetic with the privileged group that socially isolated them at Kearney. Missed impromptu opportunities like these might promote detachment from the curriculum for the trailer park kids. I knew other students who lived in Waldenburg Acres were in that class. The following excerpt is from my research journal: *I watched their faces move from interest in the book to “This is not for me. This conversation is not for me.”*

Teacher perceptions of results of project assignments may have resulted in trailer park kids students like Gwen and Miguel avoiding completing their projects. Mr. Haines explained his experience with projects this way:

Even with projects. Your kid from the trailer park, if they complete it, it's going to barely meet each requirement. I mean just enough to get it done. Often times, kids [from single family homes] will go home and their mom and dad will help them or they'll get somebody to help them, whatever. That project will come back looking like they just paid to have it done, a million bucks, and they'll go a step further and take it a step further and provide more information and take...but that's not what you're going to see from a trailer park kid. You might get a project that's completed and it might look scary and not with, not with a great deal of information and there's a difference. You see this kid that's turned in a project and you know that its, quality wise, you can't compare it to the other kids, you can't. You'll see their poster board; you'll see that somebody chewed on the end [laughter]. Or you'll see that they free handed something that looks just so horrible, or the coloring, but then you stop and you look at their effort and you stop and look and they took the time, they put their best effort into it and they tried. Maybe they've learned something from the project, better yet, right?

The observations of Mr. Haines pointed out that the single-family home community expectation for projects included: store bought items, information that exceeded the rubric, and outsider expertise. Teachers were often seduced into this display of exceeding expectations by promoting elaborate projects with public pronouncements in front of other students. They frequently selected the most elaborate projects to showcase around the school and in their classrooms. Two rubrics became evident for most projects at Kearney; the teacher-developed rubric and the rubric the single-family home parents insisted upon by turning projects into a competition. Some trailer park kids, like Gwen and Miguel, felt that they could not compete with projects of the single-family home kids. They might have avoided participating because of the public shame of their projects. Gwen's honest assessment of what it was like for some trailer park kids to come into class with their projects ready turned the focus away from a deficit perspective model and towards the human cost of attempts to participate in school:

And with like kids that they say how horrible their projects, you actually thought are really good and everything and then you'll just be like, oh, mine's even worse, I don't even, I kinda don't want to share it now.

Gwen and other trailer park kids reported that students sometimes laughed at the projects of others and when teachers heard them, they said, "Don't laugh." They could see that their projects did not measure up and they could sense how some teachers felt about their work. They sensed that along with the assessment of their projects, their life worlds were under scrutiny.

Teachers might not recognize the independence with which students who complete their projects on their own are building in their lives. Teachers reported that they wanted students to demonstrate independence. Valuing the projects of students who had extensive help from parents devalued the projects that were completed independently. All parent participants in this research valued the building of independence in their child, they wanted the grade to be authentically earned

by their child and their behaviors supported that. They did not intrude in their children's projects, believing their child would learn more if they completed it themselves. The approach practiced by the Waldenburg Acres parents was a closer match to the project completion behaviors that teachers said they wanted from their students. This concept was contradicted when teachers said what they valued appeared in the form of a project it was devalued.

The evaluation of projects often times was more of an evaluation of parental support. Norms existed in the school for what counted as parental support. Completions of projects with parental support (e.g., supplying the materials, monitoring completion, and encouragement) were bare norms of parental support at Kearney. The trailer park parents who enacted those components were viewed by some Kearney teachers with a mindset of *that's the best they can do*. Some teachers questioned that learning occurred for the trailer park kids when their project were not up to standards demonstrated by the single-family home kids. Mr. Haines aids this perceptive by stating, "Maybe they've learned something from the project, better yet."

Student participants experienced group work differently. Their behaviors ranged from being silent participants, to active participants depending on the student make-up of the group. When students were grouped with other trailer park kids, or kids similar to them in social status, they were more likely to be active participants in the group. An excerpt from my field notes when John and Isla were placed in the same group revealed interesting levels of participation:

This was the third day of students creating a skit where they had to act out a Greek myth with a modern spin. John and Isla sat in a circle with their group of five on the floor in the hallway. John laughed repeatedly and was silly, typical for a 7th grader who DID NOT want to stand in front of the class and act things out. Isla repeatedly told the group, "this is stupid, and we're going to look like idiots." She did not like the direction the skit was moving in, but submitted to the other three girls who appeared to be planning everything. The group began making their construction paper costume pieces that they planned to tape on their bodies to indicate which Greek mythological character they were portraying. Isla took to

drawing a lightening bolt for the group and John said, “I can’t draw anything.” He watched his group work.

From all of my classroom observations, this one demonstrated the highest level of group participation among any student participants. As shown in Chapter Four, John did not experience the same challenges with acceptance in school as the other students in this study. Isla was her usual self during this observation. She would not allow her trailer park status to instruct her ability to contribute and critique.

A classroom observation of Gwen looked very differently. Students were charged with constructing a building that could withstand being put on an earthquake simulator. From my field notes recorded about Gwen’s group I wrote the following:

Gwen sat quietly, with crossed legs and her top leg bouncing up and down. She watched her group’s construction take form without saying a word. She moved toothpicks here or there and sometimes found spots to put them into the building to add more security. The other three girls ignored her. Two were standing up and taking charge, while the third was the jokester of the group. She looked at me and moved her lips so I could read, “They won’t let me do anything.”

Curriculum alienation that manifested in different ways with different grade levels and different trailer park kids. As evidenced in Chapter Four, Isla refused to accept curriculum alienation and John’s peer group in the school made curriculum alienation less likely for him. For Gwen, curriculum alienation in the form of *man from man* took hold and influenced her engagement with other forms: *alienation of object* and *alienation of self* (Marx, 2000). For trailer park kids like Gwen, being alienated from others dictated her alienation from both grades and schoolwork. John, who did not experience alienation from peers outside of the trailer park, was less likely to experience curriculum alienation. Isla refused commodification and by doing so, rejected a false consciousness (Freire, 1970). She could not conceive accepting that she was “less than” the other participants in her group.

Teachers were aware of the trailer park kids' preference to work with others from their neighborhood and did their best to accommodate. When students were allowed to select their own groups, teachers were aware of how trailer park kids felt when they were the last to be picked. To circumvent this, teachers were strategic in how they formed groups and seating charts. Like Bourdieu's (1986) "person attraction or revulsion," the resistance of single family home students to work with trailer park kids in groups could have come from their parents wanting to keep them from what they perceived as an unhealthy background:

There's a huge, huge difference in treatment. When they understand half way through the year that the other kid is from the park, or she's from the park, well they don't want to be in the same group. Interestingly enough, I've seen parents in my experience who don't want their kids working with kids from the trailer park as well. They don't want to be exposed to the maybe what the parents think is an inappropriate influence, or they just don't want their kids to experience that background. You just hate for the kids to put all the kids from the trailer park in a box and say, "Well I don't want to work with any of them." But they do that, absolutely (Mr. Haines).

Approaches to group membership took the form of teachers selecting which single-family home kids were nice enough to tolerate the trailer park kids' backgrounds for the course of the assignment. The perceived deficits of the trailer park kids became the focus of teacher's energy in providing a harmonious work experience in the classroom. Answering to the power of the single-family home parents through favorable group configurations for their children was also a teacher concern. As demonstrated in the above quote, it was Mr. Haines experience that single-family home parents' misunderstandings about the trailer park kids' lives that prompted them to share with Kearney teachers their dislike of their children being placed in groups with trailer park kids. Commodification of the trailer park kids by the single-family home parents as "deviants who disrupt the school experience" (Wexler, 1996), could have been another dimension to the complex work of teaching students from diverse social class status.

Mr. Haines shared his discontent with the students limiting others' access to full participation in curriculum:

I'll say ladies, she could use some help getting in a group what do you think? And they'll be kind and they'll say "Hey come on work with us," but that has to happen all the time. It just it's not something that seems to get better. It seems like I have to keep advocating for kids from the Acres. It might be a confidence, it's probably a confidence issue or maybe they don't want to work with somebody in that group that they think is snotty or mean. And I understand that as well.

Supporting group configurations was a caring instructional practice, but a temporary fix. Associations between curriculum alienation and perceived personality deficits of the trailer park kids persisted. Social isolation leading to curriculum alienation appeared to escape some teachers, but the trailer park kids knew the familiar outcast feeling. In reference to trailer park kids, few Kearney teachers were heard to make remarks like, "It doesn't matter what group I put him in. He won't do anything anyway." Typically this occurred when groups were not preformed and thought out by teachers.

What Mr. Haines described appeared to also be part of the criteria for friendships at Kearney. Some relationships were forbidden based on single-family home parents' attempts to not have the social and cultural capital of their children tainted by exposure to the "background" of the trailer park kids. When students were left to form their own groups, treating the trailer park kids as if they were invisible became a primary tactic of the single-family home kids.

Some teachers were strategic in creating seating charts in efforts to make the school experience of the trailer park kids as stress free as possible. Mrs. Lovell described her thinking behind the way she arranged the seating chart in her classroom with the trailer park kids in mind.

It has to be; I want to say pushed on them a little bit. Like when I seat kids I am not going to put a Waldenburg Acres kid by little miss snooty who just got back from Cancun and lives in a million dollar house and tells everybody about it.

The teachers understood, on a personal level, difficulties that trailer park kids had in relating to the privilege of some single-family home students. They understood how this could create confidence issues or a *less than* identity of the trailer park kids. Teacher's understanding of curriculum alienation centered largely upon the disparity in family income among students and not the deficit perspective view that their teacher behaviors projected. The trailer park kids marginalized status impacted access to curriculum in both project and group work situations. Teachers also blamed the state sponsored curriculum for the academic performance of some trailer park kids. Some teachers believed that by not offering courses that they felt were more of a match to their natural abilities; the trailer park kids were being left behind. Teachers voiced only the perspectives of those with the most power or economic advantage when curriculum opportunities presented historical conflict, or story elements in literature. The result of this bias may perpetuate further curriculum alienation for the trailer park kids. The increased involvement (and in some cases taking control of the curriculum) by parents of single-family home kids positioned the trailer park parents to be perceived as lacking in skills, knowledge, and desire to support their children in school.

Labeling

Hidden curriculum in schools is known to involve attitudes and perceptions that send messages of marginalization to certain groups of people (Anyon, 1981). Teachers who engaged in promoting a hidden curriculum were not aware of their own engagement. The hidden curriculum of labeling at Kearney promoted adherence to false beliefs among the teachers. The labeling that occurred can be explained as a collective false consciousness among teacher participants (Freire, 1970). False consciousness among teachers presented as unchallenged stereotypes about the Waldenburg Acres community, which permeated teacher talk in hallways, copy rooms, and the

faculty lounge. Perpetuation of stereotypes occurred when administrators postulated their beliefs at faculty meetings thinking they were dismantling stereotypes, but actually were reinforcing them (Gorski, 2013). Four beliefs among teachers at Kearney existed that were inconsistent with data collected from the Waldenburg Acres participants. The four key beliefs that supported the labeling hidden curriculum at Kearney included: (a) group mentality, (b) students were safer in school than at home, (c) school provides all the experiences, and (d) trailer park bus that was rowdy. These four beliefs influenced trailer park kids labeling by teachers and single-family home kids at Kearney. I intend to substantiate the falsehood of these beliefs by infusing their examination from my data collection.

Group mentality.

Teachers viewed the trailer park kids as having connections like a family that comes together in force to ward off any affronts by those who live outside of their community. The belief could not be substantiated, as teachers had difficulty recalling specific examples. In field observations, Miguel's peer group of eight Mexican American males was the largest number of trailer park kids seen together at school. Many trailer park kids were seen with only one or two friends from their neighborhood. Even so, the belief persisted, and teachers explained their understanding with affection:

What I think is neat about the middle school kids from the park while they might fight with each other on a daily basis, and I mean being mean and nasty. But when somebody outside of their community is mean or bad, they pull together. They will stick up for their own. It's actually, it's, and it's kinda neat to see. You see somebody whose being really put down or whatever and they'll get backed up by kids who are in the trailer park. So while they might fight with each other, they're almost like a family. They'll stick together. In the end, it's like blood thicker than water type thing.

These beliefs assisted in securing a perception of the trailer park kids as an aggressive family united against others. Mr. Haines intended for his recall to be an affirmation of the good

qualities of trailer park kids in how they might *pull together* to protect each other. Teachers were unaware of the different peer groups within the trailer park and the parental influence on their children's selection of friends. The trailer park kids knew how they were being perceived. They sensed they were perceived with a group mentality. David said it best when he shared:

Exactly what happens, like there might be like two people from the park that are doing bad things all the time, getting into trouble at school, don't do homework, don't care about school and then there's the rest of us that are completely fine, just act like everybody else in the school, and then they're like, you're all bad.

This logic appeared to be selective at Kearney. When single-family home students were corrected for their behavior, the generalization of the talk, "Well all of *those* kids are bad" had a small chance of circulating. Typically, misbehaviors from wealthier students were viewed as *he just made a wrong choice and he'll learn from this* instead of the *you need to change who you are* messages that some of the trailer park kids reported they had received from school administrators.

Mrs. Lovell interpreted the segregation in the cafeteria as a choice of the trailer park kids. Like Mr. Haines, she believed that they banded together with aggressive responses when violations by students outside of their group occurred.

Some of them come in and they see the Vera Bradley backpacks and they are using the same backpack from three years ago. They see that they're different. And if you notice, they sit together at lunch. They are their own safety net. They support each other. You don't mess with the kids from the trailer park cause the other kids will take you down. They really do, in their own way; they are their own family.

Gwen might address this issue with her daily escape from the cafeteria to avoid being labeled trailer park. Isla self-selected to sit by herself in the cafeteria and did not care what she was labeled. Charlie sat near his scholar-athlete friends, trying to be accepted into the scholar athlete group. John sat with his African American friends in yet another insular world. The point of this is to call attention to aggressive terms with which the trailer park kids are labeled and perceived. *Having each other's backs, being taken down, and being their own family* were behaviors suggestive of

violence or aggressions that were not exhibited by the trailer park kids. The trailer park kids must have sensed this teacher perception, with many of them mentioning terms like, *ghetto and hood*, when describing what they believed others thought of them.

Inside the belief that trailer park kids were a family on high alert was the belief that they were angry and resentful of the single-family home kids. Mr. Campbell described their *brotherhood* this way:

They got each other's backs. It's kinda like a family. It's kind of like siblings you know. I can pick on my brother but by God you'd better not pick on my brother. And you know it's for a variety of reasons, but we know what the reason is. They're my, they're my kind, you're not. You know you're something that I kind of resent, something that I am just probably not going to be able to achieve at the age of 13, they think that.

Me: They think that?

Mr. Campbell: Oh, I think they think that, I do. I think they...

Me: Do you think their identity is already formed?

Mr. Campbell: I think they're identity is already formed.

Descriptions of the trailer park kids being confrontational with the single-family home kids was not supported in the data. As recalled from Chapter Four, when confusion about treatment or perceptions by single-family home kids towards the trailer park kids occurred, trailer park parents frequently advised their children to "Just keep being yourself and they'll know who you are" (Sheila Stevens). Two methods of coping were used by trailer park kids when acknowledging harmful things were occasionally said to them by single family home kids: (a) trailer park kids relied on their parents for guidance, or (b) they drew from inner strength to move past the damage. Consider when Isla commented:

Sometimes we're targeted; sometimes people have this negative idea about people who live in a trailer park. I do feel that. It doesn't bother me. I think I'm pretty

good. I don't need someone else to tell me that. Someone I don't know to tell me that I'm bad or I'm not smart. I already know I'm pretty good.

Similar to Gwen in Chapter Four who refused relenting power when hurt, Isla relied on her inner strength. When direct affronts on character, clothing, neighborhood, or academic achievement occurred, the trailer park kids acted as if it did not bother them. They were invisible to the single-family home kids and their invisibility went unchallenged. The closest the two groups got to conflict with each other was in the form of single-family home kids spreading rumors about Alice and then Gwen. Resolution in both cases involved ignoring the rumors and continuing in school as if the rumors were not happening. Other trailer park kids were aware of each situation, but they spent their energy supporting each other as opposed to confrontational episodes believed to have occurred by teachers.

Teacher adherence to the group mentality belief may have served to further isolate and alienate the trailer park kids. They knew they were perceived with a group mentality, which was reflected in their language when describing what they believed about the perceptions of their community. The trailer park kids may have sensed that group mentality perceptions of teachers could transition into treatment as a less capable student group in the school. Group mentality beliefs did not hold up when peer groups of the trailer park kids were considered. Their peer groups varied widely due to guidelines put in place by their parents. When verbal aggressions against trailer park kids occurred they: (a) relied on their parents for advice, or (b) drew from their own inner strength. What trailer park kids did not do was “take down” others who had “messed with” someone who lived in the trailer park. The entrenched nature of the group mentality stereotype overshadowed teacher understanding or observation of the two coping methods used. The trailer

park kids felt marginalized when similar personal qualities were assigned to all students who resided in Waldenburg Acres.

Safer in school than at home.

The second belief of the teachers at Kearney was the trailer park kids felt safer in school than they did at home. The time frame leading up to breaks that occur for holidays or summertime were believed to cause extreme stress for the trailer park kids. Teachers readied themselves for aggressive or anxious behavior peaks during the week before a long break from school. Reminders sent out by the principal instructed teachers to send students to their counselors if displays of anxiety were noted. Teachers tacked on Mondays and Fridays as being “extremely rough” for the trailer park kids. The trailer park kids were aware of the worry in their teachers as breaks from school approached. Some reported that teachers had questioned them privately about what they are doing over breaks from school with looks of concern on their faces. They noticed that other students (from single family homes) were not questioned in this way, causing confusion as the trailer park kids interpreted their teachers questions as them thinking something was wrong with their lives.

So often you hear they while the kids from the trailer park, they don't do as well as kids from your more affluent families, but kids feel safe and you hear that so often that they feel safe at school, or you would hear um, or they get kind of bummed when it's Christmas vacation you know for two weeks they have to go home or they might have to sit in that trailer for two weeks. That's where you see a lot of arguments or fights you can see the stress rising at school as Christmas approaches or a holiday approaches or summer (Mr. Haines).

By contrast, the feeling of being safe inside of the trailer park, and kids *actually* liking their neighborhood could come as a surprise to most Kearney teachers and single-family home kids:

...but I have seen girls say they wouldn't feel safe coming to a trailer park... Yeah, someone said that before and I overheard it. I think people might think that trailer parks are scary or like poor, things like that. It's what they associate it with

sometimes. It's not true. I don't feel in danger here. I feel safer here than out there (Isla Sanchez).

When teacher attitudes about the perceived lack of safety and stability in many homes of trailer park kids were juxtaposed with how trailer park kids described their level of comfort, distinctions were noted. For example, as Chapter Four demonstrated, David, Isla, John, Angela, and Miguel were especially content with their lives in Waldenburg Acres. Difficult for teachers to comprehend were possibilities trailer park kids preferred the security of Waldenburg Acres to the larger community of Larimer Heights.

The tradeoff of poor academic performance for a safe environment in school was a common belief among teachers. The perception that *they might not do well in school but at least they're safe* maintained false notions of horrible home lives, which lowered academic expectations. Teachers felt bad asking trailer park kids to meet the same academic standards as the single-family home kids when they were "dealing with so much at home." Isla challenged perceptions of others by stating, "I feel safer here than out there." Despite proclamations of contentment and preference for their neighborhood, some teachers were dismissive of this knowledge.

During long narratives in their interviews, most trailer park kids mirrored sentiments similar to Isla and mentioned they felt safe in their neighborhood. It felt like they purposely wanted me to know so I could carry the message back to school. I wondered if this was a result of the trailer park kids worrying about the teachers, who worried about them. Even when the trailer park kids assured teachers they were okay and looking forward to the break from school, teachers held on to their beliefs by continued claiming that the trailer park kids can get defensive at times.

School provided all experiences.

Even if they lacked a name for it, the trailer park kids were aware of the culture of poverty belief among their teachers. Gwen's poignant explanation of how teachers try to save her from pressed economic circumstance was explained in the following way:

Gwen: ...and I'll hate how, like people, like some teachers kinda like act like we can't afford anything.

Me: Do they act that way to you?

Gwen: In a way, like I mean they'll like pull you, like right, like I understand they're trying to be nice, but like they pull you aside right away. Let's say we have a field trip or something and they'll be like, can you afford it? And like sometimes they feel bad, like they're trying to feel bad for us in a way.

Me: When teachers pull you aside and ask you if you can afford the field trip it makes you feel, can you fill that in for me?

Gwen: Embarrassed. I feel really embarrassed about it. It's, it's nice but at the same time it's, and like also when they like keep going on and on about it, it just kind of makes you feel uncomfortable cause like just like, um, cause when Ricky (pseudonym) my new step-brother was coming there (to Kearney) Mr. Brown (pseudonym) pulled me aside and I'm not Ricky. He pulled, yeah he pulled me aside because like he knew where we lived and was just like, he just kept talking to me about it and I was like, ugg.

Gwen understood that being able to assist the trailer park kids access to trips and items typically offered by schools: t-shirts, school logo supplies, yearbooks, etc., was important for some teachers. She found being pulled aside right away bothersome because of the assumption that her family was consistently without financial means for acquiring any extras. This assumption about working class families was difficult to support. Gloria found that teachers "felt" differently about wealthy kids than working class kids: "I don't think teachers are ever going to admit feeling differently about kids who are in the wealthier homes versus kids that live in mobile homes."

The trailer park kids grew tired of being questioned about their siblings, parents, financial situations, future plans, plans over breaks from school, technology ownership, friends, former

friends, where their parents work, does Grandma live with you, etc. Students; like Gwen, Angela, and Miguel; sensed judgment about their lives were beneath teacher concern. When Gwen stated, "...they like keep going on and on about it, it just kinda makes you feel uncomfortable," she recognized the sympathy and concern in her teachers for her lack of what counted in middle-and upper-middle class suburban schools, which was the right kind of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Teachers were denied access to free and reduced lunch lists. When teachers offered financial assistance for students it had to come from their observations and what they believed they knew about students. Gwen felt torn. While she appreciated that teachers were trying to be nice, she wished their niceness occurred in a more anonymous fashion. Students, like Miguel, wanted a different approach from teachers, but he considered their financial assistance a trade off because "it helps my Mom out." While the face-to-face encounters over financial support for things like field trips were found to be demeaning by students, the teachers viewed it in a different way:

I think when they're in school for our low income [students], it's almost a release because you give them the calculator, you give them the notebook, you give them what they need and as long as I think it's done appropriately, like on the side. And I always, I kinda check their addresses. They're the German [pseudonym] street names. Unless you've really not been paying attention, you know those street names. And I'm like well just use this one and then the next day it'll have their name on the back and they'll just sit there and smile because to have to ask for something every single day, it's demeaning.

Mrs. Lovell used different tactics than most teachers at Kearney when supporting students with field trips or supplies. She expressed frustration with some of her colleagues who did not understand the trailer park kids they way that she did. She viewed the trailer park kids as being in an unfortunate situation that she needed to help. She had a habit of following up with statements that presented possibility of outliers beyond the stereotypes about trailer park kids and their parents similar to, "They're not all that way, there are some who..." As noted above, by checking their

addresses, her assumption was that the only way some of the trailer park kids could get school supplies was if she provided them. This sympathetic action robbed the trailer park kids and their parents of the excitement of shopping for school supplies and making personal selections. Mrs. Lovell viewed their lives in school as a relief from stress, which is the opposite of how many trailer park kids described their life in school.

For Mrs. Bateman, a view of sympathy also persisted. She frequently compared their circumstance to rural areas of Michigan. She felt that their lives were more desperate due to living in a community where most children lived in larger homes and had many extracurricular experiences.

If they were up north it wouldn't matter, but here it is 10 times worse. You would never have certain kids over, you just wouldn't. If you lived in the Acres you wouldn't invite kids over. I'll be honest with you. It hurts my heart. Sometimes when I drive on Deerfield Road, because I always think, "Oh gosh, it's 10 times harder for these kids." If they lived somewhere else, if they were up north it wouldn't even matter.

An acknowledgement of "if they were up north, it wouldn't matter" highlighted disparity in objectified capital, while ignoring the possibility that trailer park kids have experiences outside of school. Many trailer park parents also questioned disparities in experiences and relative family financial status in relation to the surrounding community:

I think Larimer Heights is a lot of uppity, you know. All the other kids, and I mean not everyone has a huge house, but most of them live in big houses. Like these communities, like you drive by so many of them everywhere you go. You know, it's pretty much most of the kids live in big houses. And you know it's Larimer so I feel like um, there's a lot of well, I'm better then you probably because you live in a trailer and I live in a house, a big house (Lucy Mason).

Lucy, similar to Mrs. Bateman, contemplated whether the belief that trailer park residents had little to look forward to in their lives was extreme because of the placement of the trailer park in Larimer.

She recognized the continuum of social class mentioned in Chapter One. By working in one of the

elite elementary schools, Lucy was exposed to economic privilege of children daily. When life worlds within the same community were placed at opposite ends of the social class continuum, teachers viewed the trailer park kids as having *no* experiences in their lives as opposed to recognition that the experiences they had might have varied from the single-family home kids.

Another belief existed among teachers that *worthy* experiences were defined by the experiences of the single-family home kids. The trailer parks kids sensed that some teachers had a persistent sympathy for them. Carrying the well-being about their teacher's state of mind regarding their lives was a heavy burden that could have exacerbated the desire to *fly under the radar* for many trailer park kids.

A few years back, Mr. Campbell and a colleague put together a group of nine boys that they felt needed extra-mentoring. Difficulty with academic achievement and assumed lack of parenting at home were criteria for being a member in the group. This group was taken off of campus during the school day for various experiences. The following excerpt is how Mr. Campbell remembered a day canoe trip they took the boys on:

Oh my gosh, and you would think there's an experience that every kid has had. No. These kids couldn't even, they didn't know how to get in the boat, they had trouble getting life jackets on, when the boat flipped over you would have thought the end of the world was coming, okay. It was twenty minutes away and it was like 12 bucks for a canoe. It's not like it was, by my standards, you know, the 12 bucks to them might be a whole different thing, but very appreciative.

When I asked for detail in how they were appreciative, the group mentality beliefs surfaced:

I think they were more appreciative because those nine kids were like brothers. They were pretty interlocked um...they squabble over, they squabbled, but they had each other's backs and so they would, you know, talk freely, they would act freely, but just appreciate. Four of the nine were from the Acres and those four were probably the lowest academically, had the lowest self-esteem and you know and they were all appreciative. I remembered the four of them were they were just very appreciative.

We would be hard pressed to find an 8th grade boy anywhere who would not be overly animated when with friends in a canoe that was tipping over. Talking freely and acting freely was notable to Mr. Campbell and it may have occurred as a result of being silenced in school. The assumption persisted that if the trailer park kids were to have experiences, the school needed to provide them. I wondered then, as I do now, how participants in the off campus activities felt about being singled out. What message did this well intended program send to the group of nine boys among a student body of over 1,100?

Rowdy acres bus.

The *Acres bus*, filled with only Waldenburg Acres students, took on mythical proportions at Kearney. When I rode the bus, I found out that the familiar school bus culture was intact. The 8th graders claimed the back seats, with the next layer towards the front of the bus for 7th graders, and 6th graders were relegated to the front seats. The bus driver had been driving the trailer park bus for the past 13 years. She reported that she loved the kids, which often times caused friction with the administration at Kearney. The sentiment I heard the principal of Kearney express on more than one occasion sounded something like this: *she gets in their business and tries to be a counselor when all she needs to do is bring them here and take them home.* From the perspective of the bus driver, she felt she understood the kids and worried they were misunderstood by others. She shared that she knew that others looked down on the trailer park kids and she wanted them to feel like “regular kids.”

The quick school exit towards the bus might be another indicator that the trailer park kids felt safer at home than they did at school. Like the boys on the canoe trip, when the trailer park kids were away from the confines of social isolation, they were free to be their unfiltered selves. Some teachers reacted by perceiving their bus behavior as rowdy, or out of control. There may

have been a time, before my arrival at the school, when the trailer park bus was rowdier than school behavior expectations allowed, as explained by Mrs. Lovell:

The Acre bus it would come back, one year, it would come back at least once a week, the bus driver could not stand those kids and they would say the Acres bus is coming back. They would say that on the PA, the Acres bus is coming back we need an administrator up front. Granted there were not kids in the building, maybe a few, maybe a few practicing, it's still a label that the bus would come back, and finally they just put a new bus driver on there. And when they have a kind bus driver those kids will tell you they have a nice bus.

At the same time that some teachers, like Mrs. Lovell, might recognize the labeling of the trailer park kids, by referring to them as *those kids*, she participated in the labeling. Her concern for the trailer park kids was evident in her relief that they now had a kind bus driver. Hiring their bus driver 13 years ago and the relationships she had with the students could be the reason that the bus no longer turns around to head back to school. Still, the belief among teachers regarding the rowdiness and out of control behavior of the trailer park bus existed well past the era when the bus supposedly came back to school. According to Mr. Haines:

I do know that the bus drivers, from talking to the bus drivers, if you've got, if you're the newer bus driver with less seniority you've got the trailer park route. And you just never know what's going to happen from the park to the school. The fights, the arguments, they've had to pull the bus over and have administrators drive out to the bus because the bus driver was losing control.

I cannot be certain whether my presence on the bus tempered behaviors, but I did not witness behaviors outside of the norm on the bus. The rowdy bus was not substantiated by my observations and the bus never came back to school in my seven years of working at Kearney. Students took usual risks of standing, talked amongst themselves, or shouted to others sitting a few seats away. Some 7th grade boys popped their heads up after they were asked not to by their bus driver, but that was the extent of the rowdiness. While waiting at the bus stop, students never congregated in one large group, as the group mentality could suggest. Instead, they stood in small

clusters with their friends. An “aide” on the bus described his presence to me as someone who rides along on the bus each day. He sat in the front seat and appeared to not understand why he was employed for this role in ways that seemed to insinuate he was not needed. It should be noted that the trailer park bus is the only Kearney bus that has an occasional assigned aide.

Assimilation

Full assimilation for Charlie Davis is yet to be determined. The data were sufficient enough to conclude that by the time trailer park kids were discovered as living where they do by single-family home kids, most chances of assimilation disappeared. Factors that hindered assimilation into social groups with more economic prestige in the school included: (a) living in the trailer park, (b) poor academic achievement, (c) limited organized after school schedules, and (d) clothing and other material goods. The exception to this was John Worshum, who was accepted into the African American boys group with his diminished class status. This exception could mean that minority students in suburban schools form social groups primarily by race or ethnicity and not by social class. The trailer park kids were accepting of other single-family home students, like Brenda. In this way, assimilation to friendship groups within Waldenburg Acres was more likely to occur with the trailer park kids accepting single-family home kids rather than the opposite.

Conclusions on Identity Formation

Exclusion, curriculum alienation, labeling and assimilation had diverse effects on the identity formation of the trailer park kids. The segregated existence of the trailer park kids included development of a *revolutionary identity* for students like Isla. She was comfortable in her self-selected social isolation and would not choose inclusion with others if she were living in a single-family home. Living in Waldenburg Acres assisted Isla in noticing issues of social justice and prompted development of a critical consciousness:

Well, yeah, I am big on social justice. I notice a lot of people in our school are homophobic and that gets on my nerves a lot so I would like to do something to help that population the LGBTQ. That's a problem. I think that people should be more accepting and kind to people. That community they're not in our school, I've definitely noticed that (Isla Sanchez).

It is uncertain whether Isla's sophisticated observations could have developed to the same level if she did not live in Waldenburg Acres. For Isla, and other trailer park kids, time to contemplate their marginalized treatment in school and in the community could have caused contemplations about the treatments of others.

It was unclear if she would ever accept kids who lived in single-family homes, even if she found a group with similar social justice concerns. At the time of this writing, she was unwilling to try to make friends with any single-family home kids. Isla explained that she had nothing in common with people who did not understand "what was going on in the world." Isla believed that kids from Waldenburg Acres were judged harshly, and were fully misunderstood by single-family home students and their parents. For that, and her belief that "rich people don't care about social issues" she was content with her solitary existence and revolutionary spirit. In similar ways as she and her peers were judged, Isla was harsh in her critique of single-family home kids and their parents. Many teachers at Kearney, if they really knew Isla, would most likely not disagree with her assessment of the attitudes and preferences of the single-family home kids and their parents. Isla had learned to interpret the given curriculum in ways that benefitted her. She participated in all that was required of her academically. Because of this, she did not experience curriculum alienation in similar ways as her peers; rather she contributed to the curriculum by voicing her liberal views in a conservative community. She learned about social justice issues by her notice of their *lack* in the curriculum. Isla rejected all labels associated with people, so being labeled *trailer park* did not bother her. She felt she knew the truth behind the label, so it was not worth her time

to try and dismantle it. Isla had achieved an identity of *conscientizacao* (Freire, 1970), and through her experiences, she learned to become a “true being for herself.”

By being excluded, Gwen and Alice built a form of resilience based on proving that *I am not what you say I am*. Both Gwen and Alice cycled through the development of their **resilient identities** with differing commitment. Alice was challenged early in the school year when the rumor about her smoking pot surfaced. She had to draw on resilience to return to school the next day and continued to do so, since the rumor had tainted her for the remainder of the school year. Gwen, who had two more years of experience as a student at Kearney, had more difficulty in demonstrating resiliency consistently. When she could not withstand the pressure of being a trailer park kid at Kearney any longer, Gwen enrolled in an on-line school, but then returned to Kearney three weeks later. The excerpt below is Gwen in response to a question about how she was perceived by others in the school:

Um...they like look at me different, but then I like, I don't, I look at someone not where they live, based on that. I look at somebody by their personality and how they, like, they give off, like positive ways and how they're nice and kind. And I try to be myself, really kind to other people because I want that in return.

Literally, Gwen connected how she was looked at to where she lived. Later, Gwen reported that she tried to be herself, a constant battle that she never lost. When asked how she would respond if someone was rude to her in school, Gwen answered:

I'm just kind of like “Okay, like I don't, you don't know me.” It's just like it hurts, but I really don't want to give them something to see that I'm like upset, yeah. It's cause I don't want them to see that I'm upset. It really bugs me.

Gwen's three years of middle school experience assisted in growing her resiliency. She guarded her dignity by demonstrating personal strength when perceptions of her were hurtful. In this way, she kept her power and her sense of identity intact.

The social isolation the trailer park kids experienced was due to the single-family home kids finding out where they lived as they moved from the 6th to the 8th grades. Gwen responded to this marginalization through resiliency. She got a job at the age of 14 so she could feel good about herself, buy clothes the other girls wore in school, and save up for driver's training. She expanded her friendship choices by forming friendships with young people living outside the boundaries of Kearney Middle School.

Gwen's resilience extended through refusal of curriculum alienation by participating in school on her terms. She negotiated with teachers for presentations and homework due dates on her own. Gwen found the academic curriculum relevant, as she planned to attend college, but she found it difficult to focus during lessons due to knowing what others were thinking about her, the clothes she wore, and where she lived. She used inventive and devious means to break the rules by moving about the school during lunch to avoid the cafeteria. Early in her 6th grade school year, Gwen selected to not give others the satisfaction of calling her *trailer trash* by getting off at the bus stop before the trailer park and walking home.

Mr. Haines recounted an incident in his classroom early last year that told the story of the transition that Alice experienced during the past year and that Gwen, being two years older, had learned to ignore:

Um, one day she came right out with "Well you know I'm from the trailer park and that's not really..." and all of a sudden it got really quiet. It got quiet and this was when class hadn't really started yet. Kids were filing in and starting to sit down and she just kind of blurted out with "Well you know I'm from the trailer park and at the trailer park..." And I gotta tell you, I saw kids stop and stare, like "You're from the trailer park?" All of a sudden it was like quiet and then I just saw she was her own island at that point...she was really isolated because kids found out. They're definitely on their own, they're on their own little island when they're in that trailer park.

Later on, Mr. Haines summed up the gradual increase in social isolation this way:

“They [trailer park kids] come in with no preconceived notion, but after a semester they know exactly what’s going on. But they come in with no preconceived notion, which is pretty nice. Loving that first half of the year.” Students, like Gwen, have paved the way for younger students, like Alice. Alice, like Gwen, might learn to navigate the increasing social isolation experienced by trailer park kids at Kearney. During the time frame of this study, Alice continued to try and make inroads into the popular girl’s group with no success.

Curriculum alienation for Alice took on a different form than for Gwen. Alice and her mother viewed school as a partnership between them. Mrs. Collins was highly involved in monitoring Alice’s academic progress. She supervised her homework, studied with her for tests and quizzes, and frequently retaught Alice the content that had been taught in school. Teachers had remarked that they were not certain that Alice was doing her own work at home, especially on assignments that called for large amounts of writing. Because Alice and Heather practiced at home academic behaviors only noted by teachers as belonging to the wealthier kids at Kearney, they were suspect for who was actually completing the work assigned to Alice.

The labeling of the trailer park kids was not entirely clear to Alice. She did not understand why she had been excluded from the popular group. Her mother held a similar naivety about labeling when wondering why the single-family home girls that Alice had invited over showed no interest. Heather also wondered if her observations of “they look at me weird” in reference to the single-family home parents at school events, was due to her age. The idea that possession of certain types of social and cultural capital influenced the treatment of both Alice and Heather was not within the scope of their understanding.

David, like Isla, played a substantial role in his social isolation. He selected to only have friends from inside the trailer park because he felt more understood by them:

Um, I haven't talked to them much because most of the time I just don't feel like talking to some people that don't live in the park because I know exactly what most of them think about me and other people that live in the park.

Unlike Isla, David avoided an analysis as to why people who lived outside the park thought negatively of his home community. He was frustrated by outside perceptions of his home community, but he did not ponder why this could be other than to occasionally speak with his parents about it. This was the one area where he accepted his parent's advice to "just keep being yourself and they will know who you are." He used the perceptions of others as a catalyst that added to his overall development of a *resistant identity*. David denied that there was any truth to outside perceptions of the trailer park more so than any other participant. His denials were interesting, as his family's economic status did not dictate lack of choice for place of residence in Larimer Heights as it did for most of the other participants. Additionally, his parents differed from their son by supporting the stereotypes, but could only apply them to "some of these kids," indicating that misbehaved children are living in Waldenburg Acres, just as there may be in gated communities.

David participated in his own curriculum alienation by putting forth minimal effort and refusing to do any schoolwork until the last minute. If his behaviors were due to his rejection of the trailer park label, then David's identity could be viewed as resistance towards all aspects of school as the major vehicle used for labeling. This stance may continue to provide confusion for his parents who viewed his resistance behaviors in isolation, as a personality trait and not connected to the labeling in place at school.

Although Miguel, Angela, and John all claimed to have good friends who lived outside of Waldenburg Acres, my field observations showed that this was only true for John. In common spaces in the school, John was the only student of the three who sat at a lunch table with boys

from other neighborhoods. In hallway and classroom observations, John mainly socialized with students who were not from his neighborhood; yet at home he was limited to the kids in his neighborhood that met his mother's approval. This limitation was due to her desire to not be judged by having John's outside friends come to their home. John did not see a benefit in his mother's exclusionary practices, but he did not object. Due to his minority racial status in the school, John was at an advantage for forming friendships during the school day with other African American males. In this way, social isolation for John was primarily along racial lines, which was found to be a more significant factor for exclusion than his economic status or neighborhood. Many of the parents of John's friends were professionally employed and outside of working class status. This could not be said for any other student participant. The influence of minority racial status on John's identity presented the development of an *adjustment identity*. He had learned to be successful in social institutions where he was outside the culture of power.

Uncovering John's adjustment identity requires an examination of his mother's experience and perspective in relation to John's experience and perspective. As discussed in Chapter Four, Denise and John had diverse experiences and perspectives about living in Larimer Heights and Waldenburg Acres. Denise did not feel welcomed in either community. When I asked Denise why she thought she had been treated poorly in the trailer park, was it her race or her car, she responded:

The thing is you don't want to play the race card per say. You don't want to say it's all because of our race being African American...it's not a sense of welcoming or friendliness...like I said, it's just their perception of me and I think it's a lack of knowing. Where did she come from with this vehicle? And she's dressed like that, and everything. What does she do? And I think it's the fear of them not knowing who I am and their perception that gives them that standoffish attitude.

Denise's interpretation of her treatment tended along social class lines in attention to a comparison of her objectified capital in relation to her neighbors. She looked beyond race as an indicator for

her harsh treatment in her neighborhood, yet she recognized race as the impetus for harsh treatment she received when at Kearney school events. Vacillating attentions to interpreting her treatment by others could indicate Denise might have responded in ways she presumed my stance on an answer to the question. Another possibility could be that she did interpret different motivations behind her harsh treatment. Alienation in Waldenburg Acres, for Denise, connected to assumed social class membership based on her objectified capital. Indication her treatment could have been racially motivated escaped Denise.

John experienced racial segregation at school, but he claimed it did not bother him. Denise claimed he was bothered at school when a group of boys referred to his haircut as looking like “LeBron.” His mother told him that they meant it as a compliment, but John did not receive it that way. John’s identity of adjustment was in continual motion and reactionary to navigating the school environment without disruption or challenge. It is difficult to know to what extent John heard comments like the one. The pressures of being a racial minority in a majority White suburban middle- and upper-middle class school reinforced John’s formation of an identity of adjustment.

An excerpt from my research journal contemplated other unknowns:

I understand why John was upset about being referred to as LaBron. I see the interactions in school that Denise cannot. White children from privilege, especially middle school boys, are uncertain around African Americans. They overact and refer to famous African Americans to cover their lack for words. I have never heard an African American female referred to as Oprah Winfrey. I remember when ---- [a former White student of mine] in the 5th grade thought it was rude to talk about race. What about ---- [a male teacher at Kearney] who constantly referred to --- [A former Mexican American male Kearney student who lived in Waldenburg Acres.] as “Miggy” with love and affection? Maybe --- was not a baseball player. John does not play basketball.

In field observations Miguel was limited to spending cafeteria and hallway time with other Mexican American males who lived in the trailer park. Other Mexican American students in the

school, whose parents were professionally employed, were not part of Miguel's social group. At Kearney, peer groups that formed by both ethnicity and social class were evident. Occasionally, one White male student would join the group at lunch and sometimes breakfast, and he was seen walking to class with Miguel on several occasions. The isolating practice of the single-family home students did not appear to bother Miguel since he and the other Mexican American boys comprised a stable group of eight friends. Miguel's group of friends did not spend time in the hallways in the morning. Like the rest of the trailer park kids, they hung out in the cafeteria after getting off of the bus, but they did not eat. Instead, they were on their cell phones as a symbol of having similar capital to the single-family home kids who did not display similar cell phone behaviors. At lunch, the group did not eat, or if they did it was on rare occasions and meager portions, like one slice of pizza. When I asked Miguel why he would go all day long without eating he told me it was because he did not like the food. Like the cell phone use in the morning, Miguel's identity was formed as an *identity of pride* by refusing food, pretending he understood all lessons, and claiming to have friends outside of the trailer park. His pride in his friends and his neighborhood was not without its contradictions. Miguel's claim of being "kind of embarrassed" about where he lived spoke volumes about the cover-up in which he was constantly engaged at school. During field observations, Miguel was silent in class and appeared as if he was too proud to raise his hand. It was not worth the risk of being wrong. When he was told to sit at a table at the front of his math class, Miguel did not ask his teacher why. He behaved as if it did not bother him. He was frequently behind in his assignments and selected to sit and struggle through them rather than ask his teachers for help, which could be seen as a weakness.

Out of all student participants, living in the trailer park had the least effect on the identity formation of Angela. Her claim to having good friends outside the trailer park was not

substantiated during any field observations. Typically, she arrived in class early because of her disdain for hallway behaviors of the popular kids who frequently blocked lockers by standing in their social groups oblivious to those who could not access their lockers. Despite having had five failing grades, in class, she was an active participant. Below is an excerpt from my field notes:

Students taped their CSI on Reconstruction to the classroom wall. When everyone finished they did a Gallery Walk and group discussion. Angela taped her Color, Symbol, Image in the front of the classroom. She flipped through her history book and waited for everyone else to finish taping. During the Gallery Walk, Angela viewed all of her peers' work, standing in front most times. Students formed their own groups of four near their seats and Angela participated in the discussion by saying, "Everybody pretty much did the same thing." Others in her group did not ask her to explain and she did not offer an explanation. The conversation stalled and one student struggled to take keep it going. Angela did more listening than talking during this group conversation. During the whole class discussion about their observations, Angela shared that she noticed everyone did the same thing. The teacher pressed further. Angela responded, "Everyone used black for the color." Outward shock was noted on faces. Another student called her comment rude.

In this moment, Angela did not appear to be bothered whatsoever that a few of her classmates rolled their eyes and shook their heads. Angela was adamant in her view that if people did not want to be her friend, or if they wanted to judge her because she was a trailer park kid then those people were not worth having as friends. Unlike Gwen, Isla, and Alice, she never offered what she thought the focus of single-family home kids should be. She did not care. She was developing the most *assertive identity* of all trailer park kids. Her refusal to reflect on how incomplete assignments could affect her long-term academic success was part of her assertive nature. Her perspective of seven hours in school each day as enough was suggestive of her idea that the school needed to change its homework policy. She challenged the dress code, once going to visit the principal to complain about how she was being targeted by a teacher who "coded" her everyday when other kids were dressing more revealing than she. I remember this time as Angela wearing respectable tank tops, but they were a little shy of "four fingers" wide at the shoulders. Angela alerted teachers,

counselors, and parents when she noted students who were misbehaving or engaged in self-harming behaviors. She asserted that judgmental behaviors were other people's problems. Angela denied her less than status in school, and claimed any segregation she experienced was by her choice. In this way, her assertiveness overshadowed the effects of marginalization felt by some of the other trailer park kids.

Charlie acknowledged and agreed with negative perceptions about the trailer park kids and the Waldenburg Acres community. Charlie was determined to continue separating himself from his home community. He spoke of himself in ways that established his identity at separate from his peers in Waldenburg Acres:

But like, there's me. I don't do any of the crap like most of these kids do. I just stick to myself whenever I do go around this park. And I'll say "Hi" to people and keep walking usually

In this way, Charlie was forming a *separation identity*. Charlie's success at becoming a permanent member of the scholar-athlete group was not complete. He needed to bring up his grades or he would never be fully accepted by the group. Assimilation criteria for Charlie is harsh due to his working class status, living in a trailer park, poor grades, and lack of expensive clothing and shoes. What Charlie did have were two good friends who are members of the scholar-athlete group and determination to separate himself from Waldenburg Acres. The other scholar athletes, who may have kept him sitting at the lunch table behind the group, facing them with his lunch on his lap, determined his assimilation success in middle school. The two friends he had in the group were not enough to ensure full membership during his 8th grade school year. The after school schedules of the scholar-athlete group was another hindrance that Charlie was having difficulty navigating. After football season, while the scholar-athlete group attended other extracurricular activities, Charlie opted to play video games instead of doing his homework. Charlie always has to measure

up to standards of the peer group he was trying to enter. He may be able to transcend the stigma of his neighborhood on the condition that he meet some of the criteria and that the others altered their concept of what it meant to live in a trailer park.

Resistance

Resistance by some trailer park kids took the form of alienation from tasks associated with academic success. As referenced above, alienation (Marx, 2000) from schoolwork was noted in some trailer park kids like David, Angela, Charlie, and Miguel. Angela and Charlie had difficulty understanding how earning high marks in middle school could benefit them in the future (Fine, 2003). This belief among trailer park kids often caused tense relationships with their parents who wanted them to do well in school. Helen Knight described her frustration:

I don't know where this is coming from but I hear a lot of in middle school the grades don't matter. Those words have been for me; they make me want to shake her and say, "Listen everything you do in life matters, even school, no matter what grade."

Despite knowing her mother's concern with her resistance, Angela continued to view homework as a waste of time. Miguel lacked the desire to study for tests and quizzes and resisted keeping pace with the academic rigor at Kearney. Charlie resisted schoolwork by his preference to play video games well into the night. David preferred to go unprepared for tests, refusing to use calculators when they were allowed. All four students voiced that they believed grades mattered (more so in high school), but their resistance towards participation in school, did not match their belief. Charlie described it this way when I asked him about one thing he wanted to change:

My motivation for homework and stuff like that. I'm not quite motivated yet. I think it's just the past two years because I've heard that grades don't really matter in middle school. So like in the back of my head that was always there so I felt like I could just slack off.

Mrs. Lovell added her perspective that explained actions of alienation of students from enacting behaviors that would promote high grades in school: “The way off goal doesn’t matter to most of them. They can’t see past the fact that middle school doesn’t matter.”

David, Angela, Charlie, and Miguel were disengaged from the process of schoolwork. In the case of the three 8th grade students, they did not complete large portions of their schoolwork. Similar to the “thwarting of time” as seen by “the lads” in Chapter Two (Willis, 1981, 2010), these students resisted through procrastination. Turning in assignments, reports, and projects well past the due date was typical. Different from “the lads” were expressions of valuing academic achievement (Willis, 1977). Miguel explained his fear of disappointing his family:

I was just scared cause it was like a bit project so then I was like kind of scared about it, that it would like, make me have like a really low grade. It kind of makes me feel bad because I feel like I’m disappointing my family.

Contradictions emerged when comments from students and their parents conflicted with teacher perceptions about trailer park kids having “no parenting whatsoever” when it came to school.

Teachers responded with individual policy for penalties and levels of support, largely driven by the belief that trailer park kids were left on their own to compete with the standards of the single-family home kids. Students knew which teachers they could push to the very end by turning in late work and which teachers they would rather take a zero from instead of doing the work. Knowing the extent to which the trailer park kids adhered to the expectation that they would not achieve academically is difficult. Submitting to expectancy behaviors by purposely avoiding schoolwork contributed to their status in school as non-achievers. Varied and nuanced reasons for non-engagement in school by trailer park kids was seen through a single lens by the teachers connected to teacher standards for parental support. Student behaviors promoted the belief among teachers

that the trailer park kids' parents were unaware of their role in parenting school-aged children in ways that could correlate to academic success.

Teacher resistance took form in support of the trailer park kids in three ways. Teachers attempted to dismantle the privilege of the single-family home kids, accepted late work, and resisted the teacher evaluation model. Mrs. Lovell shared that when students complimented her on something she was wearing, she resisted their privilege by sharing when her clothing was from discount retail stores:

When they say something like, "Oh, Mrs. Lovell that's a new dress." I'm like "Yeah, Target." Just because, Target, Kohls, I mean everything. Payless, always when I can get something there and they comment on it I always tell them where I got it. Now am I going to tell them that the sweater came from Nordstroms? Never. But if they comment on something, like it doesn't have to be fancy to be right. Just try to get them to realize not everybody is, do you know what I mean? It doesn't have to be expensive to be right.

Attempts to shift perspectives of single-family home kids toward contentment with less costly material goods were endorsed by Mrs. Lovell and viewed by her as championing the trailer park kids.

Mrs. Bateman resisted classroom norms that positioned students. She changed her practice of opening class with students recounting what they did during long breaks from school. Elimination of public displays of privilege in her classroom was seen as a protective measure based on worrying that trailer park kids have terrible spring breaks:

But I feel like for them, it's so much harder, the clothes, seeing things, the trips, you know, when it's spring break. I think it's much harder. I think that part would hurt more. I think if you were in a different setting you wouldn't feel it...I do worry about that. I sometimes wonder what they're thinking. Um, I've toned down the "What did you do for spring break?" talk because what if yours was terrible?

The sympathetic reaction to her perceptions caused Mrs. Bateman to adopt a protective stance towards the trailer park kids. She explained that in her younger teaching years she did not

pay much attention to the difference in wealth status among students or how students could receive and interpret life in classrooms. As a more seasoned teacher, she worked to avoid opportunities for wealthier students to showcase their wealth. By doing this, she may have reinforced her perceptions that trailer park kids who stayed home during spring break had terrible spring breaks. Students who stayed home for spring break were viewed as less fortunate. Most teachers related staying home during extended breaks to having no experiences outside of school.

From the perspective of Mr. Haines, trailer park kids eventually resisted admiring the privilege of others by remaining silent in the 7th and 8th grades as a result of staying home during spring break. He reported:

They come back, um, they're quiet. They hear about all the kids who've been to Florida and North Carolina and Mexico and the world, and Paris and you name it. And their stories are, I was a couch potato and they kind of smile about it. Nah, I went to my Grandma's and they kind of it's their big thing. So, they're a product of their environment and they learn often times, they learn when to keep their mouth shut in their own minds or some of them get to the point where like they've had enough, but I think that's more where you'll see that more in either 7th or 8th grade, but they're a product of their environment.

By providing opportunities for public pronouncements of privilege, the distance between the life worlds of the trailer park kids and the life worlds of the single-family home kids was promoted in school by some teachers and avoided by others.

The most important example of teacher resistance against the intensification of their profession was connected to the teacher evaluation model (Apple, 2004). Teachers resisted because they felt the work required to be evaluated resulted in less time to build relationships with their students. All four teachers connected teacher evaluation, high stakes testing, and standardization of curriculum as reasons why relationships with students were more task oriented than in the earlier years of their careers. This shift in increased standardization occurred over the past two decades, a time frame that coincides with the perceived change in composition of the type

of student that comes from Waldenburg Acres. This could indicate that students from a minority social class background, like the trailer park kids, created frustrations for teachers. Their alienation from curriculum made the work of the teachers at Kearney difficult in ways opposed to the difficulties they faced in teaching children from wealthier families (Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011).

Mr. Haines and Mr. Campbell resisted in singular acts in their classrooms. For Mr. Haines, last year he decided that he was going to save time on his teacher evaluation. It was the first year in his long career that he purposely moved himself out of the *highly effective* teacher evaluation category:

It's important to evaluate yourself, to constantly look back at what you can do to make things better for kids, but the evaluation process now is a business model, it's not a teaching model. The amount of time necessary to go through that you feel like you're defending yourself. Last year I just said, "The hell with it." That process takes away my creativity for school and what I like to do I in my classroom. It's a focus that's not where I want my mind to be. I want it to be with kids in the classroom.

As a result, Mr. Haines resisted and marked himself in a safe zone on his evaluation so that he could avoid all the time consuming documentation, extended responses, check marks, and uploading of evidence. This form of resistance allowed him more time to teach in ways that he preferred. He also believed his resistance of the teacher evaluation model sent a message that he had grown tired of continually having to prove his worth in a profession he had practiced and improved upon for nearly 30 years.

Mr. Campbell had decided to not fully teach the new curriculum adopted by the school district and being promoted by the state of Michigan. He viewed the curriculum shift as another form of standardization that he fully rejected. Mr. Campbell commented on how he resisted both high stakes testing and standardized curriculum:

Standardized testing is just, we brow beat kids for the sake of, and we let this happen. We've let the stinking legislature dictate everything and these clowns have never been in a classroom. You know they're dictating from Lansing. I understand

you need accountability but there's other ways to account. I got to be honest. I know standardized testing is an influence, but from what I do in my classroom, I still try to make --- [the content he teaches] fun. Now we're in this new curriculum swing and I'm not really buying into it. It is just another form of standardization um, so honestly when it comes to standardized tests, I'll administer it, I'll encourage the kids to do well, but I'm not going to worry about it. I never, ever have and you know if it comes out that Mr. Campbell, only 70% of his kids, you know, I know what I do for kids. I'm going to go home and sleep at night and I think it's just that ...

Student resistance took the form of alienation of object and alienation of self (Marx, 2000).

Student misperceptions supporting their alienation from school were that grades did not matter in middle school. Some teachers resisted in support of the trailer park kids by dismantling public displays of privilege and others did not. Teacher stereotyping of the trailer park kids matched what the trailer park kids shared about how they believed they were perceived. Teachers sympathetically viewed trailer park kids as having unfortunate lives if they stayed home or stayed in Michigan during breaks from school. Teacher resistance took the form of resisting the intensification of their profession, believing they were freeing up time to build closer relationships with students and teaching in ways they preferred. Teachers also resisted standardized curriculum and high stakes testing by finding ways to not participate fully in the given curriculum and not place emphasis on the results of standardized testing.

Social Reproduction

The positioning of trailer park kids by teachers as not being able to participate in school at similar levels as their economically advantaged peers had three contributing factors. The first two were: teacher perceptions of the dispositions of the trailer park kids and teacher perceptions of the dispositions of the trailer park parents. The third contributing factor explored the answer to a related question: *Are the trailer park kids better off at Kearney Middle School than they would be at a school with students closer to them in social class standing?*

The qualities teachers used to describe the dispositions of the trailer park kids included a long list that can be better understood in the following format:

Jaded	Quiet	Timid	Loud
Guarded	Confidence Issues	Clown	Hungry
Defensive	Nervous	Embarrassed	Resentful
Proud	Fearful	Nasty	Mean
Not as Sophisticated as Others.		Not as Polished as Others.	

Any disposition on this list might be enough to compromise participation in school. Taken together, these words advance an understanding of how collective teacher perceptions of dispositions of the trailer park kids positioned them away from participating in school.

Teacher perceptions about trailer park kids were vested in culture of poverty beliefs. A common practice of some teachers was to identify who was living in the trailer park early in the school year by looking at the addresses of the students on their class lists. Mrs. Lovell noted: “And I always, I kinda check their addresses. They’re the German [pseudonym] street names. Unless you’ve really not been paying attention, you know those street names.” This practice could have reinforced misperceptions in their mental and tactical preparation for having trailer park kids in their classrooms. As a result, some teachers engaged in giving school supplies to the trailer park kids based on the assumption of their address and not actual known need.

When students from the trailer park were involved in leadership roles in the school and achieving academically, teachers were surprised. Mr. Campbell noted:

Some of them have a certain look. Then others, like the one that I have, Jackie [pseudonym], never in a world I have ever guessed, you know, she’s very polite, she works hard, she gets good grades, but I heard in the past that wasn’t always the case, you know there’s a kid it’s turned in their favor. She’s been amazing. I think the world of her. Now there’s a kid that and so why is that change? I’d like to know that change because I’d bottle it up right now.

Being surprised by trailer park kids who were successful in school assisted in understanding the depth with which the deficit perspective persisted among teachers. Such perceptions about the trailer park kids might serve to promote their social reproduction.

Of the 14 parents involved in the lives of the trailer park kids participating in this study, 65% of them had dropped out of school, finished school at an alternative high school, or completed a General Equivalency Development (GED). What this statistic missed was the ways in which many trailer park parents had overcome life challenges of their youth. Seven of eight of the parent participants mentioned their parenting philosophy as a reaction to and rejection of the ways they were parented. All parent participants are more involved in the lives of their children than their own parents. Expressions of what to do with limited incomes are prioritized by wanting their children's education to differ from their own. Meghan Walker explains:

When I got that money, I bought this place and it's the only thing I could afford out here and it was important that I kept my kids in the same school because I grew up going to like, I went to 13 different elementary schools, so I did not want my kids moving, you know, and we weren't going back to ---- [a nearby urban area]. That's where we came from.

Upsetting social reproduction is promising when looking at improving the lives of student participants as opposed to the formative years of their parents.

However, teacher perceptions of the trailer park parents supported social reproduction as a likely outcome. Teachers used many phrases that reflected how they perceived life worlds of the trailer park parents, including:

- They're exhausted from doing manual labor
- They can't read to their kids
- They're looking for you to help them
- It's unlikely their parents can guide them

- They're jealous, proud, defensive, justifying
- Mom doesn't get home until late and then they don't have a car
- They don't have the skills
- They're working minimum wage jobs or lower factory jobs

The bullet points listed above were found to be untrue in the data other than Mrs. Walker who questioned their own skills in being able to help Miguel with homework:

I mean he might slack on his reading a little and his handwriting a bit. I did too. Well, actually, none of us have good handwriting, you know. The best that I graduated high school with, a, ahh, 5th grade reading level. Yeah, yeah, I didn't get to learn. I went to so many schools and I was socially promoted all through school. Like, I don't, you know, I don't have patience, you know, to sit and try to help him with something. I don't even know what he is doing.

Single-family home parents often mirrored a lack of skill or patience to help their children, but their response was to hire a tutor. The lack of skill or patience of parents changed in meaning when applied to the trailer park parents. Teachers perceived trailer park parents to be lacking in skills combined with not caring about the academic success of their child, or too overwhelmed by their terrible lives to care.

The other bullet points were each challenged by the data. Let me begin with points that could be dismantled by the data. First, *they can't read to their child* is directly attributed to culture of poverty beliefs. All adult participants valued reading, exemplified by Heather Collins who read with Alice nightly to ensure she understood her *at home independent reading*, a school wide requirement. Second, *they're exhausted from doing manual labor and working minimum wage jobs or factory jobs* was unsubstantiated by interview data. Sheila Stevens is a Head Start preschool program director and teacher. Heather Collins, Shari Labrowski, and Meghan Walker both work part-time. Denise Worshum works in the banking industry and Lucy Mason works 30 hours a week as a food service manager in an elementary school. Gloria Radcliff and Helen Knight might be the

closest to being exhausted from doing manual labor by their full-time work in the health care industry. All parent participants had their own car. *They're looking for you to help them* is a self-fulfilling prophecy. This belief confirmed teachers' need to feel valued and contribute to the lives of people in need. Recall Mr. Campbell taking students off campus for experiences that he presumed trailer park kids did not have. His comment about appreciation brought affirmation to him that he was helping in remarkable ways, "I remembered the four of them were they were just very appreciative." Self-satisfaction emerged among teachers as a result of culture of poverty beliefs, but it was often contradicted with professional frustrations toward non-achieving students. Descriptors mirroring the perceptions of teachers about trailer park parents reject notions of social class erasure by equal access to middle- and upper-middle class schools.

More complexities surfaced when teachers perceived the trailer park kids were aware that their parents did not support them, which was not reinforced by the data. According to Mrs. Lovell:

They don't, and sometimes I think they really believe that the ones that get angry, get angry because they believe no, that life is not fair. Like you got born to those parents, I got born to these parents, our parents both love us, but we could have switched places very easily. At some point, they realize that some of it is a luck of the draw.

Assumptions that trailer park kids might prefer a switch in parents revealed a core issue. Teachers misperceived that the trailer park kids felt supported in school by their parents. Students like Alice, David, John, Isla, Gwen, and Charlie knew that a college degree was the expectation for their future. Shari Labrowski described one of the main draws to Waldenburg Acres as the four local institutions of higher education. Having her daughter go away to college would disrupt the closeness of her family and "would be too hard on the family." Isla exclaimed her mother's influence on her college ambitions:

She does tell me that she wishes she went to college. Her biggest wish is that she'd like to go to college. But she could still do it. My mom always tells me to get my

work done; she's the one that pushes me. Of course, my mom pushes me. She's going to push me through college definitely. My mom expects me to do really well. She wants me to do really good and she expects me to because she knows I can do it. My mom tells me when I have tests. I don't depend on her, but she does remind me.

Teachers felt like they were lone actors in working to help trailer park kids like Miguel do well in school. Students like Isla use words like "of course" because she senses the perception about the involvement of her parents.

When students did not turn in their assignments on time they were viewed as being unsupervised at home. A parenting style that included natural consequences for turning in late work was not part of the understanding of teachers (Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011). They did not contemplate that trailer park parents might be allowing their children to learn from their mistakes as Shari Labrowski did when Isla was placed in a reading remediation course.

Acceptance of what constitutes parental support at Kearney included being strategic about ensuring academic success. Two factors emerged as significant enough to contribute to the positioning of students as members of the academic elite: having a "mom" network and having funds to hire tutors. The trailer park parents deferred to their children instead of "mom" networks. When parents were uncertain of due dates or assignment requirements, they depended on their child to find the information in school the next day. Parents were missing out on being members of a support community regarding their children's academic progress. Hiring tutors was beyond the economic means of most participants. Teacher perceptions of what constituted legitimate support at home included preference for strategic maneuvers by parents over home environments that fostered independence and natural consequence.

The increase in involvement by the trailer park parents, in contrast to the involvement of their parents during adolescence, provided hope towards upsetting social reproduction. The

perspectives of teachers towards dispositions and life worlds of the trailer park kids and their parents could promote social reproduction. Teacher perceptions of dispositions and life worlds could promote marginalization of the trailer park kids and their parents, which might keep them from close connections in school. In addition, social reproduction could be influenced by teacher perceptions that promote marginalization of the trailer park kids. A shift in what counts as acceptable home support of students at Kearney could help reduce the likelihood of marginalization of trailer park kids and their parents.

Trailer park kids technically have equal access to the same institutionalized capital as single-family home kids while at Kearney Middle School. Findings from this research supported that the differentiations in interpretation of who deserves access to the available institutionalized capital at Kearney were substantial. Trailer park kids were: (a) frequently blocked from access to their lockers, (b) regulated to the same cafeteria table, (c) rarely selected for leadership roles, and (d) experienced complications when trying to access after school activities and sports.

At Kearney, administrators and ancillary staff were assigned to supervise behaviors of trailer park kids during breakfast. At the same time, monitoring behaviors of single-family home kids, some of whom stood in large clusters in the hallways, blocked lockers, spilled their Starbucks, swore, and pushed and shoved each other were inconsistent. Miguel helps to understand the disruption in common school spaces:

I don't know. It can just be really annoying cause people will like, ah, will just stand with a group of friends in the middle of the hallway. It annoys everybody when people do that. You can tell cause like those are the same people that keep on doing it and it is annoying. They just take over the middle and everyone else has to go on the side. It seems like the same couple of groups.

During lunch, high-top tables in the hallway were occupied by single-family home kids each day, leaving groups like the trailer park kids little chance for access to a different setting

during lunch. Gwen explained the social relegation to the same trailer park *trash table*, every day by her observation, “No one of the higher classes would sit there.” In the multiple leadership opportunities available in the school, one trailer park kid, Jackie, was selected for a leadership role (WEB leader). Even then, she was segregated among that group. After school activities were unavailable for many trailer park kids, even if they wanted to participate, due to transportation difficulties.

The trailer park parent participants were pleased with the academic component of Kearney Middle School. Most trailer park parents felt their children were better off attending school in Larimer Heights than other less prestigious school districts. The lowest performing students had parents who were the strongest supporters of Larimer Heights Schools. Mrs. Knight explained, even when Angela was failing multiple courses, “I’m just hoping one day it will click.” Hope for a better future for their children made parents like Mrs. Knight, when describing her move to Waldenburg Acres, exclaim, “I thought it was too good to be true, so I guess it was just meant to be.”

Their place of residence in a trailer park marks them as a unique community with collective deficits in the middle-and upper-middle class community of Larimer Heights. Their children are socially isolated and marginalized in school. I asked the teachers if they thought the trailer park kids were better off at Kearney even if they were not doing well in school. Teachers were also asked if the trailer park kids would have a better chance at upsetting social reproduction if they were attending a homogenous social class school.

The teachers indicated that they agreed with the trailer park parents and felt the trailer park kids had a better chance at upsetting social reproduction at Kearney, even if they were failing

classes. All teachers commented that themes of high expectations and access to social and cultural capital of the single-family home kids are needed to upset social reproduction.

Teachers perceived having access to conversations about college aspirations of the single-family home kids could increase the expectations of the trailer park kids:

It's a pre-conceived; it's an expectation that's kind of built into you from a young age. I see these kids they come in and they're dressed to the Ts and they already know they're going to U of M, or they already know they're going to Stanford. That's where their parents went or whatever Ivy League School. Yale, they're going to go there. That's the expectation.

Mr. Haines and the other teacher participants perceived expectations placed on students, from hearing the conversations of others, were what made the difference in upsetting social reproduction. The at home expectations for most trailer park kids was that they would go to college. Demonstrated prior, this awareness escaped the understanding of the teachers. Gaining access to expectations, or conversations about which university or college to attend by single-family home kids was not found to be a likely contributor to upsetting social reproduction. The social isolation experienced by trailer park kids made hearing or participating in conversations about college choice or acceptance highly unlikely. Social patterns in the school demonstrate the two groups were not expected to discuss attendance at a college or university together as believed by the teachers.

The second teacher perception, that trailer park kids have access to the social and cultural capital of the single-family home kids, was deconstructed for similar reasons. Upsetting social reproduction by exposure to the social and cultural capital of the single-family home kids was unlikely because of the limited opportunities for interaction. Learning about access to different form of capital by trailer park kids may be random, as explained by Mrs. Lovell:

But I think the perception is there, that somehow, if you, we have the highest socioeconomic, maybe their hoping some of it will rub off, but what do you want to

rub off? The snottiness? [Laughter] You know what I mean? What do you want to rub off? I don't know? Or do you want them sitting next to the students who has the skills that their child can maybe learn to mimic?

Considering the data from this study, trailer park kids lack all opportunities to spend extensive amounts of time in single-family homes. Repeated exposure to forms of capital unfamiliar to the trailer park kids, presented in a friendly and non-discriminatory manner, is unlikely to occur. The isolating circumstances of trailer park kids at Kearney Middle School is most likely, the strongest factor impeding the upsetting of social reproduction. Social isolation hinders access to social capital, cultural capital, and expectations that could promote upsetting social reproduction. A second contributing factor could be the lowered academic expectations of some teachers due to their belief culture of poverty beliefs and their deficit perspective of the life worlds of the trailer park kids. Teacher perceptions and parental perceptions revealed trailer park kids from Waldenburg Acres were better off at Kearney even if they were failing classes.

Conclusions

The presentation of identity formation in Chapter Two examined critical concepts that informed this study. Exclusion, or “absence as presence” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000), was demonstrated. The trailer park kids’ invisibility in school was a reaction to the marginalization they experienced by their working class status and residence in a trailer park. Their alienation from the curriculum made it unlikely that they were gaining the necessary skills and competencies to become *portfolio people* (Gee, 2000). Presented in Chapters Four and Five, some trailer park kids, like Miguel, were likely to be removed from the formal school curriculum, exiting school with “know how” skills (Althusser, 2001). Alienation of curriculum took the forms of *alienation of object, alienation of self, and alienation of man from man* (Marx, 2000), most notable with Gwen. For some trailer park kids, forms of alienation increased in intensity as students moved from the

6th to 8th grades. Possession of social and cultural capital that held less value in the school (Bourdieu, 1986, 1987), the trailer park kids' contributions of skills and competencies were overshadowed by their social isolation, leading to curriculum alienation. Life worlds of trailer park kids were silenced (Fine, 1987, 2003). Teachers participated in labeling the trailer park kids based on beliefs related to stereotypes from a professional development model more than 10 years ago (Payne, 1996). Culture of poverty beliefs in the teaching culture at Kearney made penetrating stereotypes difficult. Teachers adhered to a false consciousness (Freire, 1970) that trailer park kids rejected. Their identities were formed as individuals that rejected attempts at commodification as in the homogeneous manner the teachers understood the trailer park kids (Wexler, 1996). In Chapter Six, discussions of findings include implications for educators, limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and possibility for new theoretical contributions.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Four themes emerged in this dissertation that could inform future studies: (a) social isolation and curriculum alienation were influenced by possession of social and cultural capital that conflicted with expectations, (b) the culture of power in the school was possessed by wealthier students, (c) labeling was promoted through unchallenged beliefs in stereotypes, and (d) identity formation of trailer park kids was in reaction to perceptions of others and the structural ways that schools benefitted middle-and upper-middle class students. By examining these four themes, this work could help transform school experiences of trailer park kids and assist teachers in recognizing ways in which their beliefs might have affected student identities, experiences, and future opportunities.

Social Isolation and Curriculum Alienation

Social isolation was supported by the dissimilarity in types of capital that students at Kearney possessed. Bourdieu's (1987) argument, that "habitus experienced in the form of person attraction or revulsion" (p. 5) as the essence of relationships was confirmed by the experiences of most of the trailer park kids. With the exception of Charlie and John, who had formed identities of acceptance (Charlie) and adjustment (John), the trailer park kids were limited to friendship choices among allowable neighborhood peers. As explained in Bourdieu's (1987) theory, the trailer park parents exhibited similar traits by eliminating friendship choices for their children. "They don't want to be exposed to the maybe what the parents think is an inappropriate influence, or they just don't want their kids to experience that background," was a sentiment expressed by Mr. Haines when referring to parents of single-family home kids. Similar attitudes and restrictions imposed on the trailer park kids by their parents escaped teacher perceptions. Teachers were unaware that some trailer park kids were restricted to only friends who met parental approval. Attempts by both

groups of parents to keep their children away from certain *backgrounds* translated for trailer park parents to keeping their children away from trailer park kids they viewed as unsupervised. For middle- and upper-middle class parents, they kept their children away from trailer park kids lacking in the types of social and cultural capital they valued. Expectations that their children could only make friends with others having similar types of social and cultural capital were evident in the behaviors of the single-family home students at school and their parents when encountering trailer park parents at school events.

Adherence to marginalization (Freire, 1970) was noted in the ways that the trailer park kids did not resist social isolation; rather they made the best of it. The trailer park kids experienced restrictions on friendship possibilities at school and home. Some of them understood that their social isolation at school placed them in an inferior social position. They expressed discontent with being viewed homogeneously with assumed similar personality traits and home situations. They reacted to what they knew their status was in school by behaviors that demonstrated they did not want attention, and that they wanted to “fly under the radar.” Their middle school years were an experience of continued and increasing isolation from the single-family home kids. Spending as little time as possible in the hallways, the trailer park kids moved quickly to get to class. The seating option during lunch was a *trailer trash* table, where only kids from “lower classes” sit (Gwen).

Curriculum alienation occurred in tandem with social isolation. Lacking the right kinds of social and cultural capital expected in middle-and upper-middle class schools (Lareau, 2000, 2011), some trailer park kids were pseudo group members during projects, skits, and assignments. When not in groups with students they knew from their neighborhood, most trailer park kids rarely contributed beyond carrying out tasks they were assigned by other students. When groups were

comprised of a majority of trailer park kids, they had a better chance of having their ideas heard. In this way, alienation of curriculum extended to confirm *alienation of man from man* (Marx, 2000).

Many teachers at Kearney facilitated a project-based curriculum where at home projects were culminating demonstrations of knowledge for units of study. Curriculum alienation occurred for most trailer park kids through a redefining of assessment criteria by parents of single-family home kids, who assisted their children with projects. Store bought items, outsider expertise, and information exceeding the project rubric became the norm in many classrooms at Kearney. The social and cultural capital required to create projects that exceed expectations and set the bar higher for the trailer park kids, left many of them behind. Projects at Kearney were primarily a display of social and cultural capital, and secondarily about curriculum learning. For these reasons, trailer park kids experienced curriculum alienation when projects were required. Contradictions emerged when assessment of student projects appeared to be more of an evaluation of parental support. Projects that were completed independently did not hold the same assessment value as projects with store bought items, outsider expertise, and extensions on the knowledge asked for in the rubric. While teachers stated that they valued independence in students, their classroom practice established that high levels of parental involvement were valued more than independent work by students.

Issues in the formal and incidental curriculum at school may have promoted curriculum alienation for trailer park kids. Instructional practice that could have explored social class tensions in literary text were presented as one sided, going into detail about the challenges of living a privileged adolescent life. Moments for analysis of historical events from multiple viewpoints were presented as cause and effect from the perspective of governments. Removing some trailer park

kids from accessing curriculum occurred when their life worlds were not named or talked about in schools (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000, Fine & Weis, 1997). The formal and incidental curriculum at Kearney was framed through the life worlds of the middle-and upper-middle class.

The Culture of Power

The second theme recognized the culture of power at Kearney was comprised of the single-family home kids. As extensions of their parents, members of the culture of power set the codes for participation (Delpit, 1988, 1995). Codes for the culture of power at Kearney were different from intentions of Delpit (1988, 1995). Instead of being taught explicit rules of the culture of power, it was enacted through displays of social and cultural capital in school. Explicit codes to the culture of power (Delpit, 1988, 1995) were replaced by the varied roles played by the single-family home kids through their participation in extra-curricular activities, leadership roles, school-based sports or clubs. The trailer park kids were rarely selected or considered for leadership roles in the school. They were silenced in school, which decreased the likelihood of trailer park kids entering into the culture of power (Fine, 1987, 2003). When teachers were asked about the trailer park kids in relation to the single-family home kids, words like “quiet” and “timid” emerged. Kearney may be contributing to the development of portfolio people and others who were more likely to remain working class (Gee, 2000).

The way a student dressed provided a second code to the culture or power at Kearney. Students with the most expensive clothing and widest selection of clothing had more social power at Kearney. Expensive clothing proved to be what some trailer park kids really wanted to possess. For trailer park kids, expensive clothing meant they would move closer to the culture of power and elevate their social position at school.

The third code to being a member in the culture of power was ownership of common spaces in the school. An aspect of group behavior engaged in by students who were members of the culture of power involved the hallways. Single-family home students in the culture of power disrupted the hallways between classes. They stood in large clusters to talk and blocked lockers, oblivious to others who needed to get to their lockers. Many single-family home kids ignored the trailer park kids by looking past them when in the same school space.

Also owned by the single-family home kids were the classroom spaces. The trailer park kids typically tried to enter their classes earlier and sat quietly waiting for class to begin. The trailer park kids pretended not to watch the interactions of the single-family home kids or hear what they were saying before class began. Both student groups ignored each other, rarely made eye contact or interacted with each other. Most trailer park kids demonstrated a sense of being *othered* in classroom spaces. At times, the body language from the single-family home kids was animated to the extent that it consumed the classroom environment, while the trailer park kids sat in silence.

Single-family home kids occupying positions in the culture of power in the school meant something different for teachers than for trailer park kids. Described as “self-preservation,” Mrs. Lovell explained how she returned phone calls of high-powered parents first to minimize the possibility of them going above her professional position to lodge a complaint. Attending to concerns of powerful parents first, dismantling economic privilege in classrooms, holding resentment for the wealth of some single-family home kids, being impressed by other single-family home kids were all part of the codes expressed by teachers as having power in the school. Some teachers engaged in tactics to lessen the focus of expensive clothing or trips by controlling the open classroom talk. Many teachers had difficulty relating to the lifestyles of some of their single-family home students because of trips, vacations homes, extracurricular activities and clothing.

Some teachers identified trailer park kids as being resentful, saying that they understood the resentment as they lived below the economic means of many single-family home kids. In relation to trailer park kids, teachers often used words like “snotty” or “snoody” when describing the single-family home kids. Other teachers were impressed with the wealth and varied experiences of some single-family home students. Some teachers appeared to be content with their identity of teaching many students who were more economically privileged than they were. They appeared to take pride in teaching students from the culture of power.

Labeling Through Stereotypes

The third theme that emerged, labeling of the trailer park kids, was promoted among teachers by exaggerated accounts and stereotypes. Teachers held on to unsubstantiated beliefs about trailer park kids having negligent home lives and engaging in aggressive behaviors. Teacher beliefs in stereotypes included: (a) group mentality, (b) safer at school than at home, (c) no experiences outside of school, and (d) the rowdy bus. By perceiving the trailer park kids homogeneously with over simplified personal qualities and similar behaviors, teachers unknowingly furthered their marginalization (Gee 2000, McLaren 2015, Weis 2008).

Teachers believed that all the students from the trailer park supported each other with a *group mentality* when conflict arose with students outside of their neighborhood. Phrases like “blood is thicker than water” were used to describe a non-existent group bond among the trailer park kids. When teachers reported the group mentality, they appeared to be amused at what they really believed to be true. Contradictions emerged when data revealed the social isolation of the trailer park kids. They had little chance for conflict with others in the school because they had limited interactions with others in the school. Most single-family home kids were dismissive

towards the trailer park kids, as if they did not exist. By contrast, most trailer park kids were aware of the single-family home kids, their status in the school, and types of clothing they wore.

The *safer at school than at home* stereotype was deeply engrained in many teachers at Kearney. Perpetuation of beliefs that as extended breaks from school approached spikes in misbehaviors or anxiety could be noted among trailer park kids who were unsafe in their homes or neighborhood. This belief among teachers was contradicted by the sentiments of trailer park kids. Many of them shared that they liked their home community and felt safe there. Two results of this belief were noted. First, some teachers considered it a trade-off that trailer park kids were in such a safe school, unlike their homes and neighborhood; so academic standards were lowered in support of their perceived rough lives. Second, trailer park kids sensed that some teachers worried about them when they were at home, which made them feel uncomfortable. Some trailer park kids felt they were constantly defending their lives during side conversations with teachers who were operating from a place of care.

The *school provided all experiences* stereotype was promoted by teacher attitudes and behaviors. For many teachers at Kearney, the marker of what counted, as experiences outside of school, became a measure against the advantages of the outside school experiences of the single-family home kids. In this way, many of the trailer park kids could not measure up. As a result, outside experiences of trailer park kids were devalued in school to the extent that they were never talked about.

To provide experiences for trailer park kids that teachers assumed were not provided at home, they created special programs. Low academic performance and perceptions of no parental support at home were the criteria for these special groups. Many trailer park kids felt uncomfortable when teachers offered assistance with paying for things like field trips or spirit

wear. Even though teachers thought they were providing private support, the 8th grade trailer park kids remarked about being embarrassed when being pulled out in the hallway, or being called up to the teacher's desk to answer questions as to whether their family could afford what was being offered. Gwen remarked that at times support was provided so fast that the trailer park kids missed the opportunity to pay their own way. Some teachers checked the addresses of their students at the beginning of the year to identify students who lived in the trailer park.

The fourth stereotype that promoted labeling was *the rowdy bus*. This belief maintained teacher's ideas regarding trailer park kids as being out of control when in unsupervised spaces. Different standards for behavior were accepted at Kearney for the single-family home kids as opposed to the trailer park kids. In the morning, ancillary staff was assigned on a rotating basis to supervise breakfast in the cafeteria. Yet, at the same time supervising the hallways at Kearney occurred randomly. Assumptions were made about group behavior, leading to the belief that trailer park kids needed more supervision and systemic surveillance than single-family home kids (Foucault, 2012). Labeling trailer park kids as a rowdy group with out-of-control bus rides may have added to ways in which they were positioned against the single-family home kids by adults in the school.

Identity Formation

The fourth theme resulting from this study was that identity formation of the trailer park kids was influenced by two factors linked to school. First, they formed identities in opposition to what they believed others perceived about them and their lives. Second, they formed identities in opposition to the middle-and upper-middle class structure of school. The identities formed by trailer park kids demonstrated that they were not the culture of power in the school (Willis, 1981, 2010), but they held a similarity to the 'lads' as their identities were formed in *opposition*. All of

the identities formed could assist in upsetting the culture of poverty beliefs among teachers and single-family home kids that the trailer park kids knew existed.

In-bias group beliefs existed among teachers (Gorman as cited in Gorski, 2013). This could explain why some teachers continued to believe stereotypes about the trailer park kids without real evidence. Stereotypes about cultural behaviors, linked to a presumed culture of poverty, added to the defensiveness under which identities of the trailer park kids were formed (Bomer, Dworin, May & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2008;).

The second influence on identity formation was a reaction to the structure of schools providing advantages to middle-and upper-middle children that was evident by way of the lack of opportunity that existed for the trailer park kids (Anyon, 1980, 1981; Brantlinger, 2008; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2011; Wexler 1996). During the school day, their marginalization prevented full inclusion in the curriculum and classroom lessons. Due to transportation concerns and not being selected for leadership roles or sports teams, trailer park kids had limited opportunities for engagement in after school activities.

Variations in identities of trailer park kids that formed, included: revolutionary, resilient, resistant, assertive, separation, adjustment, and pride. When such identities were positioned against teachers' perceptions regarding dispositions of the trailer park kids (quiet, timid, mean, nasty, loud, nervous, embarrassed, etc.), a different picture emerged. The formation of their identities, occurring in opposition to attitudes about them and the structure of school, became important components for upsetting social reproduction in their futures.

Implications for Kearney Middle School

The research could assist the community of Kearney Middle School on multiple levels, including:

- An honest examination of the hidden curriculum that currently may be impeding the school's designation as a *School of Character*
- Opportunities for teachers to examine bias in an inviting professional development model like *Equity Literacy*, honoring voice
- Review and revamping of the WEB program to increase effectiveness
- Engagement in a curriculum and pedagogy that acknowledges all life worlds and increases the likelihood of *The Threshold Principle* (Guttman, 1987)
- Alternative transportation opportunities after school so more trailer park kids could participate in extracurricular activities
- A mentoring program that works in conjunction with high school counselors to follow the trailer park kids as they move through school

Earning their designation as a *School of Character* was important to many adults at Kearney. They believed that this designation could help students who are living in a world where school shootings occur. Last year, Kearney was not awarded the school of character designation. Whether people agree with the underlying socially conservative push for establishing schools of character is not the point. More importantly, the rejection of earning this designation might speak directly to the findings in this research. The focus of the schools of character work attempts to build character so that students can be safe in school. Trailer park kids recognized the hidden curriculum of marginalization in the school more than many adults entrusted with their care. This work might help to expose the hidden curriculum and influence a shift in perspective on the school-wide character work to uncover the root of the problem.

Second, this research assists in challenging stereotypes by exposing realities of the teacher beliefs at Kearney. Avenues can be created for open and honest dialogue that examines bias. A

departure from the “sit and get” model of professional development is recommended. Helping teachers to understand that examining bias is difficult work should take prominence in the discussion. To be effective, a break from current professional development models is required. Readily absorbable curricular packages with enclosed checklists, tables, graphs and a *how to* pedagogical approach have assisted teachers at Kearney to arrive at the collective bias seen in the school. Administrators developing greater trust in teachers’ ability to improve their practice and want to do what is right for their students could help in an examination of bias regarding trailer park kids. By revealing where students have “entered the game” (Counts, 1932) and freeing teachers to learn about bias associated with social class, the school may make important inroads into improving the school lives of trailer park kids.

At the end of studies about social class and school, some researchers promote a change in society to end poverty. I agree that we need to continue to “deal with the poverty issue which gets pushed aside by politicians” in the words of Mrs. Bateman, but what I am advocating for here is to start. We can no longer wait for an end to poverty without reflecting on our own misperceptions that impact students, like the trailer park kids. The starting place may be professional development focused on *equity literacy* (Gorski, 2013). This would mean a shift in focus from the deficit perspective of Payne’s (1996) work, to understanding issues of how classism impedes equal access to curriculum and instruction. Professional development like this might help to support upsetting social reproduction for many trailer park kids.

Third, a review and revamping of Kearney’s Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program is needed. WEB is a program used at Kearney to help 6th graders transition to middle school. The WEB program is not effective for trailer park kids. They do not feel like they belong at Kearney. The structure of the WEB program divides sixth grade students randomly into groups of ten and

each group has two 8th grade student mentors. A half-day orientation in the summer compliments group meetings on Wednesdays during the school year. In the three years that the program has been in effect, more than 100 students have acted as mentors. In the current year, one was selected from Waldenburg Acres, which was a shock to Mr. Campbell, as he wanted to “bottle up” whatever that student had. Evidence that 6th grade students from the trailer park begin to be isolated in the second semester of their 6th grade year suggested that the design of the WEB program was ineffective in helping the trailer park kids develop a sense of belonging. A redesign might work in conjunction with other suggestions and begin to address issues of social isolation experienced by the trailer park kids.

Fourth, a curriculum focused on the life worlds of all students at Kearney could improve the academic achievement and life chances of the trailer park kids (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000). The *Threshold Principle* (Guttman, 1987) was applicable to some students at Kearney. Single-family home students had a better chance of learning beyond the threshold, whereas trailer park kids had a greater likelihood of not reaching the threshold. Enacting a curriculum and pedagogy with a shift in focus from learning about the life worlds of elites to learning about social justice issues could assist in increasing engagement in the curriculum for the trailer park kids.

Two recommendations surfaced from research participants to improve their school experiences. The first was providing transportation home from after school extra-curricular activities that would allow more trailer park kids access to school clubs, sports, and activities. A second suggestion was implementing a mentoring program to ensure that trailer park kids have support when leaving middle school and entering high school. Teachers mentioned that they often wonder what happened to certain trailer park kids since they rarely come back to see them.

Creating a strong mentorship program might help open avenues for the trailer park kids to gain social and cultural capital and have successful transitions as they exit high school.

Implications presented as specific to Kearney should be applied to other schools with similar and dissimilar contexts. The proliferation of manufactured home communities in the United States has grown tremendously in the last half century. In 2014, new construction manufactured housing was 9% of the total new housing. Numbers of 8.6 million people living in trailer parks in the United States present an urgent need to attend to an area of research that has been ignored by scholars (Chapter Two). The trailer park parents were eager to share their life stories, indicating invisibility extends beyond their children's schools, their neighborhood, and immediate community. The broader reach of this research could expose systemic marginalization connected both to residence and social class. Currently, the attention paid to trailer park residents in the United States is from those who are profiting from their imposed economic exploitation. The pressing circumstance that we have missed an entire population in research should be addressed. There may be other implications that extend beyond those found in this research.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to one middle school in a large suburban school district. The school district had one manufactured home community that permitted children located within its attendance area. Replication of this research in larger numbers of schools, across multiple districts could provide validation of the findings. If social isolation, curriculum alienation, and labeling are found in other studies that focus on students who live in trailer parks inside of upscale suburban areas, then connections to themes that emerged from the data in this research could be expanded. If studies are completed in middle-and upper-middle class districts with a greater number of trailer parks, the results might differ from this research.

A second limitation of this study is that teachers and trailer park kids presented the actions and motivations of the single-family home kids and their parents. Projections as to what caused the social isolation, curriculum alienation and labeling of the trailer park kids came from the interpretations of teachers and the trailer park kids based on their experiences. Future studies should expand the research design to include other school groups in the school that could provide a more accurate description of single-family home kids' actions and motivations.

The last limitation of this study is connected to my role as the learning consultant at the school. I entered the field with the knowledge that I needed to be clear with participants that although I had research interests, there were no right or wrong answers to my questions. I can never be certain whether I was successful in that task, but my sense is that due to the length of narratives, participants were eager to tell their stories. Lastly, I cannot excuse my background in being from a working class family. I attended schools that expected most of the neighborhood kids to work in factories after graduating from high school. Although I attempted to bracket my biases and preconceived ideas, it is difficult to be certain whether my life experience influenced what was found in the field.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research focused on children who lived in a manufactured home community within the attendance boundaries of a middle-and upper-middle class suburban school. Additional research is needed that focuses on school experiences of working class children attending middle-and upper-middle class suburban schools to determine if the findings of this research can be validated. Past research contributed to understanding experiences of students who attended schools located in areas with homogeneous social class backgrounds. As working class parents reach for access to prestigious suburban school districts, future research focused on the conditions in middle-

and upper-middle class suburban schools with heterogeneous social class could add to the findings in this work.

Suburban manufactured home living varies widely. Some communities are brand new, with an entirely different home design and industry standards than communities like Waldenburg Acres. Some trailer parks are remnants of the time when trailer parks were first established in suburban areas. Differences in the school experiences of these students may persist when they attend school in homogeneous social class schools. More research in this area would assist in determining the importance of symbolic capital in American schools. The stigma associated with being a trailer park kid may be found to be more extreme in higher income suburban areas.

An ethnographic study using a longitudinal research design should be considered to determine if the social isolation, curriculum alienation and labeling of the trailer park kids that was found in the present study continued through high school. The eighth grade students in the present study were transferring to a high school populated with middle- and upper-middle class students. As students mature and age, the differences in socioeconomic status could be more important than in middle school. Differences, such as having luxury cars, wearing designer clothes, and preparing to attend prestigious first-tier colleges, could magnify the discrepancies that contribute to social isolation, curriculum alienation and labeling. Longitudinal design could determine if the findings in middle school extended into high school. In the example of this study, readers may want to know: Did Angela involve herself more in the social part of school by attending homecoming and other dances? Did Charlie gain full acceptance in the scholar-athlete group? Was Gwen the valedictorian of her graduating class? And did Miguel attend the local alternative high school, or was he able stay on the academic track?

Exploring the phenomenon of urban *slum land lording* in a comparative study with the economic exploitation of trailer park living is another area of future research. This could expose the conditions residents of trailer parks are forced to live under due to the fragile social class standing of many residents. Parent participants reported living conditions in Waldenburg Acres as unfavorable. A comparative study might reveal if similarities and differences in systemic economic exploitation, marginalization of residents, and unsanitary conditions could be found. The elderly and people who suffer from health impairments are known to select trailer park living. Once establishing residence in a trailer park it is rare to be able to leave. A trapped existence ensues where residents are embarrassed of their living conditions and subservient to the power of park owners and their management staff. Knowledge that different types of marginalized groups live in trailer parks furthers the need for research into the exploitive practices of trailer park ownership. Future research could inform opportunities to revisit the regulations governing trailer park ownership and residence.

Research emphasizing the nebulous position of teachers in affluent suburban schools is needed. A comparative ethnography in the life experiences of middle school students who live in trailer parks and students who live in single-family homes could add clarification to themes that emerged in this research. The teachers in this study exhausted efforts attending to distinct groups of students. The outcomes varied and were influenced by teacher beliefs in stereotypes about working class students who live in a manufactured home community. The life worlds of the more affluent students in the school constructed the life worlds of both the trailer park kids and teachers as at odds with their own life worlds. The teachers experienced internal conflict with resentment towards the single-family kids' advantage and privilege. The gap in social and cultural capital between the single-family home kids and trailer park kids generated themes where teachers felt

forced to defend privileged lifestyles they resented. This gap also generated themes of pathology among the teachers for the lives of trailer park kids. At the same time teachers referenced trailer park kids and their families in unflattering ways, they felt a personal responsibility to fix their lives.

What needs to be examined is where the true pathology resides. A new phenomenon exists where affluent students and their parents hold the culture of power in schools captive. Teachers are subservient to demands of greater positions of power in school for individual students. Academic achievement that extended beyond curricular and teacher expectations was the norm at Kearney. Communications from single-family home students disputing one or two points on assignments subtracted from time that could be spent on other demands of the teaching profession. For some single-family home parents, strategic moves to procure greater advantage for their children in school knew no bounds. While teachers were charged with secret alliances with trailer park kids to hide their residence, they also were charged with protecting single-family kids from their own parents. Future studies in affluent schools attending to the influence of economic privilege on the formation of teacher identities are needed.

Research in middle- and upper-middle class schools with a minority working class student demographic and a mix of race are needed. Findings from this research suggest that race, as a factor of social inclusion, is more significant than social class with male students. The school in this study was segregated primarily by race, and secondarily by social class. Future research design could capture the hesitancy with which male White affluent students' attempts at social interactions with male African American students are awkward and tenuous. Received as ridiculous, African American students like John grew tired of being referred to by names of famous professional African American athletes. Indications that White suburban adolescents have one

scope of identity for African American males that can be spoken of in school were limited to athletic prowess. Schools with similar demographics could use the data garnered in this study to explore with students the polarizing perceptions and stereotypes of African American males in the United States. Future research could also examine if diverse or parallel interactions, perceptions, and stereotypes can be found between African American and White females in suburban schools with similar demographics. Affluent African American males in the school demonstrated social behaviors closer to those seen from trailer park kids than the affluent White students. Research on affluent African American students in affluent majority White suburban schools could contribute to future research and have implications for race relations in the United States.

Wondering why research on students who live in trailer parks has been missing in the literature led me back to findings in other studies. People are uncomfortable talking about social class (Davidson, 1997; McLaren, 2015). In schools of education, future teachers are invited to learn about social class concerns strictly through the lens of school funding (McLaren, 2015). More focus needs to be placed on teacher education courses that dismantle stereotypes associated with students from differing levels of social and cultural capital. This work must be thoughtful as to not promote the very stereotypes it might work to dismantle by exchanging them for other forms. By doing this, future teachers will enter the classroom ready to identify and confront the hidden curriculum that promotes the culture of poverty beliefs. If schools of education place prominence on courses that include matters of social class as separate studies instead of the current practice in linking it with school funding, teachers could enter the field knowing the risks involved in promoting stereotypes that are damaging to the life chances of students living in trailer parks in upscale suburban areas.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

(Behavioral) Research Informed Consent (Teachers)

Title of Study: *Growing Up in a Manufactured Home Community: A Study of Identity Formation in Middle School*

Jeanne VanLaan
College of Education

Purpose

You are being asked to be in a research study of identity formation in middle school because you teach in a middle school. This study is being conducted at Wayne State University, Middle School, and . The estimated number of study participants to be enrolled at Wayne State University, Middle School and is about 35.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

In this research study, I am interested in learning about the perceptions of students who live in a manufactured home community and how the perceptions might impact their identity formation. I am also interested in how the students living in the manufactured home communities believe they are perceived by others. I hope that my research will be able to contribute to positive outcomes for middle school students who live in manufactured home communities.

Study Procedures

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to be interviewed by me two or three times. Each interview will last between 45 minutes and one hour. I am the only researcher working on this project, so all information shared will be kept confidential as in not being able to be identified in the interview transcripts. During this entire study I will use a code known only to me that will represent your identity. This way there is a double check on keeping your identity confidential. If at any time during the interviews, you do not want to answer a question you do not have to. Interviews will be scheduled with at least two weeks between them. All transcripts of interviews will be available to you for your feedback about accuracy of information. I will take notes during the interviews and ask to be able to record the interviews. At the end of this study all recordings and notes will be destroyed. Types of questions that will be asked are: Can you remember back as to what it was that drew you to become a teacher? There have been many changes over the years to the teaching profession, what changes do you appreciate, if any? Which changes to your profession do you find bothersome? How do you believe the students who live in the manufactured home community are perceived by others in the school?

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

Study Costs

Participation in this study will be of no cost to you.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University, or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight [e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), etc.] may review your records.

When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

If photographs, videos, or audiotape recordings of you will be used for research or educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study. You do have a right to review and/or edit the recording of your interviews at any time during the study. Personal identities will be disguised by use of a code system known only to me.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decisions will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Jeanne VanLaan or at the following phone number . If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313)

577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call the Wayne State Research Subject Advocate at (313) 577-1628 to discuss problems, obtain information, or offer input.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant / Legally authorized representative*

Date

Printed name of participant / Legally authorized representative *

Time

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Time

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

Study Costs

Participation in this study will be of no cost to you.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. However; the study sponsor, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University, or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight [e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), etc.] may review your records.

When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in the study, you can later change your mind and withdraw from the study. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Jeanne VanLaan at the following phone number . If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call the Wayne State Research Subject Advocate at (313) 577-1628 to discuss problems, obtain information, or offer input.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant /Legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name of participant/Legally authorized representative

Time

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Time

Parental Permission/Research Informed Consent Template (Child Assent)

Title of Study: *Growing Up in a Manufactured Home Community: A Study of Identity Formation*

Jeanne VanLaan, PhD Candidate

Purpose

You are being asked to allow your child to be in a research study at their school that is being conducted by Jeanne VanLaan, College of Education, from Wayne State University to learn more about the identity formation of middle school students. Your child has been selected because they live in a manufactured home community and attend middle school.

Study Procedures

If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, your child will be asked to be interviewed by me two to three times. Each interview will last between 45 minutes and one hour. I am the only researcher working on this project, so all information will be kept confidential as well as your child's identity. During this entire study, I will be using a code known only to me that will represent your child's identity. This way there is a double check on keeping your child's identity confidential. If at any time, your child does not want to answer a question they do not have to. Interviews will be scheduled with at least two weeks between them. All transcripts of interviews will be available to you. I will take notes during the interviews and ask permission to do an audio recording of the interview. At the end of this study, all recordings and notes will be destroyed. Types of questions that will be asked are: What is your favorite part of being a middle school student? What is your least favorite part of being a middle school student? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a manufactured home community?

Benefits

There may be no direct benefits for your child; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to your child for participation in this study.

Costs

There are no costs to you or your child to participate in this study.

Compensation

You or your child will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All information collected about your child during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Your child will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies your child personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor (if applicable), the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], Office of Civil Rights [OCR], etc.), may review your child's records.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child at any time. Your decision about enrolling your child in the study will not change any present or future relationships with Wayne State University or its affiliates, your child's school, your child's teacher, your child's grades or other services you or your child are entitled to receive.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Jeanne VanLaan at the following phone number . If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call the Wayne State Research Subject Advocate at (313) 577-1628 to discuss problems, obtain information, or offer input.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To voluntarily agree to have your child take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to have your child take part in this study, you may withdraw them at any time. You are not giving up any of your or your child's legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Print the name of the Participant

Date of Birth

Signature of Parent/Legally Authorized Guardian

Date

Printed Name of Parent Authorized Guardian

Time

Signature of Parent/Legally Authorized Guardian

Date

Printed Name of Parent Authorized Guardian

Time

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview #1: Exploratory Open-Ended: Teachers

- How long have you been teaching at Kearny Middle School?
- When you think back do you remember what it was that drew you to teaching?
- What are some of the highlights of your teaching tenure?
- What is your view of the middle school learner?
- Many teachers report that they are dismayed at all the changes that have happened to the teaching profession over the past few decades. Would you share with me what, in your opinion, are the top three changes in the teaching profession that you wish would have never happened?
- Some of the literature reports that students from different levels of social class are either at an advantage or disadvantage in school. Can you comment on this statement and add your own experience to your answer?

Interview #2: Semi-Structured: Teachers

- I would like to review a little of the transcript from our first interview. Is there anything you would like to add or amend?
- When thinking about the disparity in family income of the students here at Kearney, what comes to your mind in regards to how family income might influence the daily experience of students?
- Some research speaks to the identity formation of high school students being influenced by what happens in schools in regards to peer relations. In your experience as a middle school teacher have you noticed any differences in treatment of students toward one another based on what neighborhood they live in? If so, then please share what you have noticed.
- In your experience, what have you noticed about the identity formation of students from Waldenburg Acres? In what ways could the identification of living in a “trailer park” influence the students’ self-perception or the way they are viewed by others?
- Would you comment about your perceptions of the differences, if any, in students who reside in Waldenburg Acres as opposed to students who live in single-family homes? In what ways might these two groups differ in formation of their identity? Are there any specific transformations as the students move from 6th to 8th grade? If so, what do those transformations look like?

- Some researches have asserted that difference in parenting styles influence the way students experience the school day. Claims that middle-and upper-middle class parents have more of a match to the expectations in school have been made. Would you comment on your observations that might add to, or shift this research claim?

Interview #3: Semi-Structured: Teachers

- I would like to review a little of the transcript from our second interview. Is there anything you would like to add or amend?
- In your observations, to what extent do the students mix together in peer groups as far as low-income students with high-income students?
- To what extent is school a disrupter of social class for low-income students? In what ways might the structure of school, or the curriculum assist in promoting or disrupting social reproduction?
- Can you think of ways that students could contribute to their own improvement in social class status? What might be some of the obstacles to this idea?
- Some researchers have observed that students from lower socio-economic status are prone to resistance behaviors in school. What types of resistance behaviors have you noticed from students from Waldenburg Acres? Are the school behaviors of students who live in Waldenburg Acres different than students who live in single-family homes? If so, please explain.
- Think of students you have taught over the years that may have been resistant to school. What types of strategies were you able to employ to help resistant students? Is there a school policy that was followed, or did you react on an individual basis?

Interview : 1: Exploratory Open-Ended: Students

- What is your view of school?
- Could you walk me through which parts of attending Kearney Middle School are your favorite?
- Could you walk me through anything about attending Kearney Middle School that may bother you?
- Do you think your experience at Kearney Middle School is different from the kids that do not live in your neighborhood? If it is, can you help me to understand in what ways it might be different?
- What types of after school activities do you participate in and with whom do you participate?
- Can you help me understand if there advantages and disadvantages to living in Waldenburg Acres?

Interview #2: Semi-Structured: Students

- If you remember back to our first interview, is there anything you would like to add or change?
- Can you help me to understand what middle school students feel some of the important factors are in deciding who they become friends with or who is in their peer group?
- Some people believe that in middle school there are nice kids and not so nice kids. They also believe that sometimes middle school students make comments to others or treat other students badly for one reason or another. Why do you think some people believe this about middle school students?
- What matters most to middle school students?
- What is your view of yourself? Do you view yourself as successful in school? What can you share with me about your personal qualities that help your success in school? If you do not view yourself as successful in school, why is this your view?
- If you could change anything about the students at Kearney, what would be the top change you would make? If you could change anything about the teachers at Kearney, what would be the top change you would make?

Interview #3: Semi-Structured: Students

- If you remember back to our second interview, is that anything you would like to add or change?
- Adults often wonder how students select their friends. What are some of the things you look for in people you are friends with? Do you have many friends outside of your neighborhood? How often do you spend time with your friends outside of your neighborhood? If you do not have any friends outside of your neighborhood, why do you think this is so?
- Do you find school to have too many rules, or just enough? Whatever your answer is, please help me to understand the reasons why you answered this way.
- People who work in schools remark about the importance of school and try to teach this to their students. In what ways has this message been sent to you in school? How about the ways it has been sent to you at home? Do these messages about the importance of school influence your behaviors?
- What is your plan for the rest of your years in school? What do you want to do when you finish high school? What do you plan to do when you are an adult?
- Who has been the biggest influence on your life and why? How do you want to live when you're an adult?

Interview #1: Exploratory Open-Ended: Parents

- What drew you to this community?
- Is there anything you would change about the Waldenburg Acres community?
- How would you describe your involvement in school as a parent of a middle school student?
- Do you perceive Kearney as a welcoming environment for all parents? What suggestions might you have for Kearney Middle School?
- Do you think your experience, as a Kearney Middle School parent is different from families that do not live in your community? If so, then in what do you see as the differences?
- How does your child spend their leisurely time? Can you walk me through the typical after school experience of your child?

Interview #2: Semi-Structured: Parents

- I would like to review a little of what we talked about in our first interview. Is there anything you would like to add or adjust?
- Would you please walk me through the advantages and disadvantages of living in a manufactured home community?
- I am curious about your perceptions of the Larimer Heights School District. What are your views of the school district in comparison to other school districts?
- What is your view of Kearney Middle School?
- Are there any school or district policies or procedures you can think of that advantage or disadvantage your child? If so, what is your thinking about the policy or procedure and how might it be changed?
- Think back to the total experience of your child at Kearney and your experiences as a parent of a Kearney student. Can you describe any school or district policies or procedures you would like to suggest that are currently missing?

Interview #3: Semi-Structured: Parents

- Remembering back to our last interview, is there anything you would like to add or adjust?
- Could you walk me through some of your experiences as a parent of a middle school student attending Kearney?
- Some parents of middle school students' report that being a parent of a middle school student can sometimes be challenging and unpredictable. In your experience is there any truth to that statement? If so, is it based on a specific incident or an overall pattern?
- What is your view of your child as a student? I would like you to describe their student behaviors at home and what you know of them in school. What subject areas are they good in and are there any areas where they struggle?
- Have there been any academic interventions either at school or home that have helped improve the academic success of your child? Can you describe your involvement in intervening academically at home with your child? Has your child participated, or wanted to participate in any advanced placement courses at Kearney?
- What are some of the personal qualities that you would like the friends of your child to have and what do you find important in each quality?
- What matters most to you as a parent of a middle school student? What are your dreams and hopes for your child right now and in the future?

**APPENDIX C: APPROVAL FROM WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD**

**WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

IRB Administration Office
87 East Canfield, Second Floor
Detroit, Michigan 48201
Phone: (313) 577-1628
FAX: (313) 993-7122
<http://irb.wayne.edu>

CONCURRENCE OF EXEMPTION

To: Jeane VanLaan
College of Education

From: Dr. Deborah Ellis *M. Kurch / em*
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

Date: February 15, 2017

RE: IRB #: 125016B3x

Protocol Title: Growing Up Trailer Park: A Study of Identity Formation in a Suburban Middle School

Sponsor:

Protocol #: 1812000187

The above-referenced protocol has been reviewed and found to qualify for Exemption according to paragraph #2 of the Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101(b)). The above-referenced protocol has been reviewed and found to qualify for Exemption according to paragraph #4 of the Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101(b)).

- Social/Behavioral/Education Exempt Protocol Summary Form (received in the IRB office 12/15/2016)
- Research Protocol (received in the IRB office 12/12/2016)
- Research Informed Consent - Parent/ Child Permission Slip (revision dated 11/29/2016)
- Research Informed Consent - Teacher Permission Slip (revision dated 11/29/2016)
- Parental Permission/ Research Informed Consent Template (revision 11/26/2016)
- Interviews

This proposal has not been evaluated for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human subjects in relation to the potential benefits.

- Exempt protocols do not require annual review by the IRB.
- All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the IRB BEFORE implementation.
- Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the IRB Administration Office Policy (<http://irb.wayne.edu/policies-human-research.php>).

NOTE: Forms should be downloaded from the IRB Administration Office website <http://irb.wayne.edu> at each use.

Notify the IRB of any changes to the funding status of the above-referenced protocol.

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ABSTRACT**TRAILER PARK KIDS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
IDENTITY FORMATION IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

by

JEANNE MARIE VANLAAN**August 2018****Advisor:** Dr. Thomas Pedroni**Major:** Curriculum and Instruction**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of this dissertation was determining influences behind identity formation, social reproduction, and resistance of students residing in a local manufactured home community and attending a suburban majority White, middle-and upper-middle class middle school. Narratives from participants were included to assist in disseminating intersecting lives of students (the trailer park kids) with their parents and teachers. The lives of the trailer park kids at home and at school were portrayed. Research before this study focused on similar themes, but unique was examination of effects on students attending school as a minority by social class standing and their place of residence.

The settings were the manufactured home community (Waldenburg Acres) and the school (Kearney Middle School). Ethnographic methods were used to obtain data in the field. Eight students and one parent were interviewed three times each. Four high seniority teachers were also interviewed. Interviews took place at school, in homes of participants, at Waldenburg Acres clubhouse, or in local restaurants and coffee shops. Students were observed in their core curricular classrooms, hallways, the cafeteria and on the bus. Transcripts from interviews, field notes and research journal entries were included as part of the data analysis and discussion of findings.

Exposing differences in the school day between the trailer park kids and the middle-and upper-middle class (single family home kids) surfaced as key to understanding findings. The trailer park kids experienced social isolation and curriculum alienation attributed to perceptions and bias of the single-family home kids and teachers. Teachers affectionately demonstrated culture of poverty beliefs that promoted stereotypes, a segregated existence and social reproduction for the trailer park kids. Resistance by both teachers and trailer park kids was passive in response to the culture of power in the school, held by the single-family home kids.

Further examination of heterogeneous social class schools and schools where students from manufactured home communities attend was suggested to add to these findings. Implications of social class difference need to be explored in teacher education. Professional development for teachers that disrupts culture of poverty beliefs and exposes the non-neutral curriculum is needed.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**JEANNE MARIE VANLAAN**

Education	<p>2018 – Doctor of Philosophy Wayne State University, Detroit, MI Major: Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>2004 – Master of Education Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI Major: Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>1999 – Bachelor of Science Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI Major: Elementary Education</p>
Licensure	Michigan Professional Teaching Certificate
Professional Employment	<p>1999 to Present Rochester Community Schools, Rochester, MI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Consultant • Fifth grade teacher • Fourth grade teacher <p>2005 to Present Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI Adjunct Lecturer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility and Opportunity of Public School Teaching K-8 • Advanced Exploration of Public Schools Teaching K-8 • Action Research for Graduate Level Students • Methods of Teaching Mathematics K-8
Professional Memberships	<p>American Education Research Association Rethinking Schools Michigan Education Association Rochester Education Association</p>