Race and Class at Age 30

Ongoing struggles and successes

Elizabeth Aries

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Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
1. Genesis of the Research and the Age 30 Follow-up	1
2. From Graduation to Age 30	8
3. The Changing Understanding of Race and Whiteness	27
4. Learning from Racial Diversity	47
5. Learning from Class Diversity	64
6. Democracy Outcomes	76
7. The Path to Upward Social Mobility	84
8. Bridging Two Worlds	101
9. Race, class, and gender in the workplace	121
10. Next steps	140
Appendix A. Research methods	154
Appendix B. Survey questions	158
Appendix C. Interview questions	161
References	165

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My deepest gratitude goes to the participants in this study. When I originally approached them in 2005, they generously agreed to take part in a study of race and class during their first year of college. At the end of four years at Amherst and again eight years later as they were turning 30, I extended new invitations to take part in follow-up studies. Eighty percent of the original participants agreed to take time out of their incredibly busy lives to be part of the age-30 study. The response rate is impressive for research carried out over 12 years. The voices of the participants are the heart of this work. The strength of this study is due to these participants' willingness to speak openly and honestly about their lived experiences with race and class, and about their lives more generally. They provide us with great insight into how and to what extent race and class continue to play a role as they move into adulthood.

I am tremendously appreciative of the opportunity I had to work with five bright, engaging, intellectually curious, and dedicated Amherst students on the coding, analysis, and interpretation of the data – three honors students: Rosalyn Jules Langhinrichsen Rohling (Rosy) '18, John Paul Miller '18, and Ursula Adwoa des Bordes '19, and two special topics students: Sydney Clark '20, and Clinton Oshipitan '22. My three honors students read through transcripts of the 43 interviews and formulated research questions they wanted to examine. I suggested the area for my two special topics students. Each of these students coded the portions of the interviews relevant to their research questions. I worked with them on devising coding categories and interpreting the data. On the earlier phases of this study, I was not able to use students to assist with the research for reasons of confidentiality.

Rosy Rohling was interested in racism and racial inequalities. She began with the supposition that White people are key to the creation and perpetuation of the racial systems of power present today, as well as to dismantling them. She chose to examine

the White participants' understanding of whiteness, race and racism and how that understanding changed from entry to college to age 30. Chapter 3 draws heavily on her thesis research, and some of the data she examined appear in Chapter 4 as well.

JP Miller wanted to examine the benefits of socioeconomic diversity in higher education. He looked both at the learning accrued by affluent and lower-income participants through interactions with socioeconomically diverse peers, and at the comparative outcomes for lower-income and affluent students eight years after graduation in terms of graduate education, income, occupation, and levels of civic engagement. I have drawn on his work in Chapters 5 through 7.

Ursula des Bordes focused on the role race and class played in the paths – straight or circuitous – that participants followed to their current jobs, and the career challenges they faced. She examined race and class differences in the attainment of traditional markers of adulthood, i.e., marriage and children; the relative time participants devoted to work, close relationships and other activities; and participants' hopes and fears for the future. Chapters 2 and 9 draw upon Ursula's thesis work.

My two special topics students, Sydney Clarke and Clinton Oshipitan sought to understand how lower-income participants bridged the distance between the world in which they had grown up, and the world they now lived in. Most of these participants had followed a very different career trajectory post college than that of family members or friends from home. Sydney and Clinton looked at whether participants returned to home communities, the degree to which the participants struggled with bridging two different worlds, the challenges they faced in their current relationships with family and friends from home, and how those friendships compared to relationships with their Amherst friends. Clinton also looked at the messages that participants would pass on to their children about social class. I have drawn upon their work in Chapters 5 and 8.

Enormous thanks go to Hannah Song for her insightfulness in helping shape the study – defining areas that should be examined, framing questions, and designing the Qualtrics online survey. Had her schedule permitted, I wish I could have collaborated with her on the analysis of the data.

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Elizabeth Aries

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1

Genesis of the Study and the Age 30 Follow-up

At the turn of the 21st century, Amherst College, like most elite schools, was educating students who came primarily from wealthy families. But concern was growing at these colleges and universities that they were “reproducing social advantage instead of serving as an engine of mobility.”¹ In 2003, when he assumed the presidency of Amherst, Tony Marx argued the college needed to reexamine who our students *should* be. He was troubled by the fact that Amherst College was not promoting more opportunities for upward social mobility by educating students from more modest backgrounds. In his 2004 commencement address, President Marx made the case for admitting more students from families with few financial resources or whose parents had never attended college, arguing that if we did not do so, “we will neither prepare our students for the world, nor will we serve our role in that world.”

The argument for admitting more lower-income and first-generation students went beyond principles regarding the promotion of social mobility, equity, and social justice. Considerable social science theory and research had documented the benefits that derive from being part of a diverse group of classmates. The encounter with classmates whose experiences and views differ from one’s own provides the opportunity to have one’s preconceptions, prejudices and assumptions challenged.² As Alexander Astin, a professor of higher education and organizational change has found: “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years.”³ President Marx argued in his Convocation address to entering first-year students in 2006:

The fact that we are not all the same is not merely a pleasant aspect of this college: it is an essential strength. We select and gather differences

purposefully, and at some expense, precisely to build that strength. We build it because we learn more than if we were or behaved as if we were all the same. ... Your differences are also your best gifts to each other. ... How to build a community on the basis of diversity is the pre-eminent challenge of our world and our time.”⁴

Over the course of the past decade-and-a-half, Amherst College has gone to great lengths and considerable expense to recruit a more socio-economically and racially diverse class and has done so with great success. An exact comparison of the percentage of students of color is impossible over time because in 2005 the college did not separate out U.S. students by race from international students. That said, in 2005 when this study began, 33% of the student body self-identified as students of color; in 2019, 45% of the U.S. students did so. The percentage is higher when international students are counted. In the Class of 2009, 47% of students were receiving financial aid; in the Class of 2021, that number was 56%. But 20% of students at the college are now Pell Grant eligible so financial aid is going to many more students from low-income families. Amherst College moved forward rapidly in increasing the racial and socio-economic diversity of the student body. But it began doing so without a sound understanding of the challenges that students of color, low-income and/or first-generation students would face on campus, or of the changes the college would have to make to best support these students to enable them to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion on campus, to thrive academically and socially, and to ensure their success.

Origins of My Research Study

The motivation and ideas for my research on the ways race and class matter at an elite college grew out of the new perspective I was gaining from interactions with lower-income students, as well as from my research on social class and identity. To take one example, I advised the thesis of a lower-income Black woman. In the end, she accomplished more than she had ever imagined possible. The day her thesis was due, she came into my office proudly cradling three copies in her arms, each in its required black binder and said, “Wow, those black binders are really expensive.” To that point, I had never considered the financial burden we were imposing on some students by requiring those binders. I asked how she paid for them and was told, matter-of-factly, she had bounced a check at Hastings, the local stationery store. Repeated interactions like this highlighted for me the ways our policies and practices assumed an affluent student body. This needed to change.

My interactions with lower-income students led me to wonder about the role that the Amherst College environment might be playing in influencing class-based aspects of

identity for lower-income students. I embarked on research with Maynard Seider, a sociologist who taught at a state college where little class variability was present in the student body.⁵ We compared the experiences of lower-income students at the state college to those at Amherst College, where significant differences in wealth exist.⁶ We found the great disparities in wealth among students at Amherst created a heightened awareness of social class in lower-income Amherst students, and accompanying feelings of inadequacy, discomfort, and exclusion. At both colleges, lower-income students gained new forms of cultural capital and had to cope with changes between who they were before college and who they were becoming as they acculturated to the college environment. These resulting discontinuities were heightened among the Amherst students.

Because the state college had few racial minority students, our research focused only on White students. I was interested in expanding the research to look at the impact of both race and class on students' experiences. What, for example, did it mean to be Black on a predominantly White campus if you were affluent versus lower-income? What did it mean to be a lower-income student at a school with predominantly affluent students if you were Black versus White?

The Class of 2008 had only 22 Black students, but the following year 41 Black students accepted offers of admission to the Class of 2009. I had a sufficient sample size to draw from for a study of race and class issues on campus. From my vantage point, as both a professor and researcher, two major questions were on my mind: (1) What challenges did students face on campus due to their race and social class? (2) To what extent did learning from diversity actually take place? While one of the main arguments for creating a *racially* diverse student body was the claim that educational benefits result from being part of a racially diverse community, I felt it was important to try to determine whether learning was actually taking place and what exactly was being learned. Arguments for *socio-economic* diversity had been based on promoting social mobility and equity. Additionally, I wanted to find out whether *educational* benefits might exist by having a socio-economically diverse student body.

The Three Phases of This Study

My study began in August 2005 during orientation week for students in the Class of 2009. The 58 students from that class who agreed to participate were recruited from four groups: affluent White (N = 14), affluent Black (N = 14), lower-income White (N = 16), and lower-income Black (N = 14). The students from affluent families indicated no need for financial assistance in their applications. The lower-income students were coded by the Admissions Office as having high need for financial assistance and/or limited family education. All groups were balanced by gender. Participants were interviewed

face-to-face and filled out short on-line surveys at the beginning and at the end of their first year. The results of the study of the first year at Amherst are summarized in the book *Race and Class Matters at an Elite College*.⁷

As 2009 approached and most of my 58 participants were graduating seniors, I felt it would be important to extend the original study. Over the course of their remaining three years of college, the participants had many new experiences, and further growth and change had likely occurred. I wanted to learn more about how the challenges students faced due to their race and class played out over time, whether students had learned more deeply about race and class from the diversity in the student body, and what specifically they learned. I invited the 58 participants to take part in a follow-up study in the Spring, 2009. Fifty-five of the original 58 participants (94.8%) agreed to be interviewed and complete an on-line survey.⁸ The results of that study were reported in a second book, *Speaking of Race and Class: The Student Experience at an Elite College*.⁹ Both books drew heavily on the voices of the students in detailing their experiences and their learning.

Over the years since the publication of those books, I considered following up with my participants one final time. My research had found that for many of the lower-income and Black participants, Amherst was a real struggle, both academically and socially. How did things turn out for them? Psychological research has shown that for most college graduates, identity exploration continues through the decade of the 20s, and marriage and parenthood may still be years away. But by age 30, most people feel that have reached adulthood.¹⁰ Thus I decided to wait until participants were turning 30 to do my follow-up study.¹¹

I wanted to examine the ways race and class may have continued to impact participants' lives. Did the four groups of participants attain similar outcomes in terms of graduate education, occupation, and income? I hoped to find out about the role that race and class might play in the work world; in the nature of participants' relationships with friends, family, romantic partners, possible children; in their voting rates, volunteerism, civic engagement; in the structure of their current lives, and in their hopes and fears for the future.

I also wanted to examine participants' *retrospective* thoughts about what they learned about race and class from being part of a diverse student body during their years at Amherst. People's interpretations of their college experiences may change over time. For example, when asked at age 30 to reflect on her overall experience at Amherst, a lower-income White participant said, "If you had asked me right after college, I would have said terrible; everything's terrible. It's a terrible place." But over time she came to see that her struggles were related to mental health: "I would have had those struggles whether I had been at Amherst or any other school. I really appreciate the level of support Amherst ultimately did offer over time. And so I think they did the best they could. And I do appreciate that."

Amherst prides itself on its low attrition rate. Ninety-three percent of students graduate within 6 years.¹² In regard to my sample, which included many more high-risk students, all but two of the original 58 participants who entered the college in 2005 had graduated from Amherst, most in four years, all in six years. The two who had not graduated, one lower-income White and one lower-income Black participant (3.4%) only completed the freshman year, and therefore were not included in this final phase of research. Of the 56 potential participants who were eligible for the current study, forty-five took part (80%).

As in the previous phases of data collection, participation at age 30 involved completing both an interview and an on-line survey. Thirteen lower-income White participants (87% of the original sample), nine lower-income Black participants (69% of the original sample), 12 affluent White participants (86% of the original sample), and nine affluent Black participants (64% of the original sample) completed both the survey and the interview, for an overall return rate of 77%. Two additional participants, one lower-income White and one affluent White participant completed the survey but not the interview for a total return rate of 80% for the survey. While the sample size is small, the participation rate was extremely high for a study carried out over 12 years. I was concerned about whether the participants who agreed to take part in the new phase of the study differed from those who did not. I was able to obtain occupational information on LinkedIn for all but one of the missing participants. Their occupational data mirrored the occupational data for those who chose to participate.¹³

For those readers interested in the full details about the research methods used in this study, information on the recruitment of participants, data collection, and data analysis are presented in Appendix A. The survey questions can be found in Appendix B and the interview questions in Appendix C.

Strengths and limitations of the data

The majority of higher education research today is based on large national samples, giving those findings a great deal of credibility. But large-scale quantitative studies also have limitations. The actual voices of participants are lost. As psychologist Jim Sidanius concluded from a large-scale study he conducted with colleagues: “We were not able to connect the mountains of very useful quantitative data with the students’ own subjective understandings of their lives and the challenges facing them over the college years.”¹⁴ Quantitative researchers formulate questions in advance, and only get information on the specific questions asked. Survey questions may fail to encompass dimensions of participants’ lived experiences that are important.

My latest study, like the two before it, was largely based on interview data, which is much more labor intensive to collect and to analyze than quantitative data, but which

can provide a deeper understanding of students' actual lived experiences. It is possible to ask follow-up questions to gain greater clarity on the meaning of each response. In providing answers, participants often associated to something else they wanted to tell me about. Thus, interviews enabled me to learn about important things I never thought to ask about.

I chose a very broad set of topics to examine, and that decision had costs and benefits. I was eager to learn about many dimensions of participants lives and thinking, but in doing so I was not able to get as much depth of information on each topic as would have been desirable. Gaining such depth on all the topics I covered would have required more than one interview with each participant. I was convinced that many fewer participants would have agreed to devote that much time to this study. Thus, this research must be considered to be broadly exploratory and "hypothesis generating." I began without specific hypotheses to test, only many questions.

I hope this study will provide educators useful information about the outcomes for the students they have worked so hard to educate and support; that it will stimulate further thinking about changes that could be made to ensure that learning from the race and class diversity in the student body occurs for an even higher percentage of students; that it provides ideas for further policies, programs, practices that would address racism on campus; and that it will help ensure graduates leave college with the knowledge and skills to be able to understand, respect and work with people who have social identities different than their own.

My sample is small and unique to Amherst at a particular moment in time. The research raises more questions than it answers. I hope future researchers will examine the extent to which the findings in this study generalize to other samples and settings. Participants at age 30 were only beginning their careers; most were not married, and few had children. We do not know yet how their lives will develop over the next 10 years. One of the participants asked at the end of his interview if I would be calling to interview him again in 10 years. I said when he reached 40, I would be 80, making that highly unlikely. But I would welcome a younger researcher to follow this group further into the future. The feedback I have gotten from participants is that they have enjoyed having taken the time to reflect on their lives, and I think they would continue to be responsive.

For lower-income, first-generation and racial minority students who may read this study, I hope it provides a valuable window into the future, and that many results provide solace and reassurance that it is worth persevering, despite all the challenges entailed in making it to graduation. Suggestions are made for institutional changes that I hope, if adopted, will improve students' experiences at Amherst and increase their learning and concern about race and class inequalities.

Notes

¹ Leonhardt (2004).

² Allport (1954); Chang (2001); Gurin, with Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin (2004); Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin (2002); Gurin, Nagda & Lopez (2004); Pettigrew & Tropp (2006).

³ Astin (1993), p. 398.

⁴ Marx (2006). See https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/president/past_presidents/marx (accessed April 11, 2020).

⁵ Mass College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, MA.

⁶ Aries & Seider (2005, 2007).

⁷ Aries (2008).

⁸ One low-income White, one low-income Black, and one affluent White student chose not to participate.

⁹ Aries (2013).

¹⁰ Arnett (2015).

¹¹ Bowen and Bok (1998) and Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006) provide examples of longer-term outcome studies for Black graduates of selective colleges.

¹² See <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/facts> (accessed December, 10, 2019).

¹³ The occupations of the missing participants were classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO, 2010). In total, two missing participants (18%) had occupations in the managerial class, seven (64%) held occupations in the professional class, one (10%) held a job in the technicians and associate professional class.

¹⁴ Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears (2008), p. 321.

2

From Graduation to Age 30

The 20s are a period of change. This period was labeled by psychologist Jeffrey Arnett as *emerging adulthood*, a time marked for college graduates by continued identity exploration; instability in love, work and place of residence; and self-focus.¹ To begin, I want to provide some background on the journeys the participants took over those emerging adulthood years, and on their thoughts at age 30 about what lay ahead. I was interested in the extent to which participants' race and class had shaped their lives since graduation and their hopes and fears for the future.

In the interviews, participants were asked to describe what they had done since graduation and explain why they made the choices they did. They were asked more specifically: (1) whether they had taken jobs or internships that they saw as a stepping stone to other jobs or a career; (2) whether the jobs or internships they took determined the community in which they lived, or whether they picked a community in which they wanted to live and sought a job there; and (3) whether they had taken any jobs along the way they were overqualified for because they needed the money. In telling their stories, participants were asked to include information about graduate school attendance and whether they had plans now at age 30 to pursue any further education – none did.

After tracing participants' paths to their current jobs, the focus of the chapter shifts to participants' intimate relationships – whether they were in a committed relationship, were married and if they had children. Participants' current lives are then examined in terms of where their time and energy were invested – work, close relationships, or other activities, as well as their hopes and fears for the future. I was interested in whether race and class made a difference regarding marriage and parenthood, their current life structures, or their thoughts on their futures.

Job Trajectories

The most common path for participants after graduating was to head to internships, jobs or programs.² Sixty-one percent followed this path. Similar percentages of Black (67%) and White (56%) participants graduated with an internship, job or program in place. Percentages were similar as well for lower-income (59%) and affluent (62%) participants. Some of those jobs were direct stepping stones to desired careers. For example, after graduating, a lower-income White woman stayed in Amherst over the summer working in a lab and writing up her honors thesis for publication. She then took a job for two years as a lab technician, during which time she “would be meeting people in the field and getting the skills I needed to pursue a research career.” She then went on to graduate school for her PhD in Biology.

Others wanted to do service work before going on to desired careers. A lower-income Black woman “always wanted to be a doctor. I think after Amherst I was a little bit hesitant to go straight to medical school.” She wanted to teach in a community that was high need: “I joined the Mississippi Teacher Corp and I taught high school biology, genetics, field experiences in the Mississippi Delta for two years.” She then taught for another year at a college prep high school before going on to medical school. A lower-income White man won a Fulbright teaching scholarship to Taiwan, where he “learned Chinese better and taught English” while serving as a “cultural ambassador” for our country.³

When asked at age 30 to list all the jobs they held for at least six months since graduation, that number did not differ by race or class.⁴ Roughly a quarter (21%) of participants had held only one or two jobs, half (53%) had held three or four different jobs, and another quarter (26%) had held five to eight jobs.

Graduate or Professional School Attendance

A few participants (7%) went straight to graduate school. All of them began PhD programs. Most participants who would eventually go on to graduate school chose to work for a period of time before pursuing further education. Within four years of graduating, a third of the participants had begun graduate school, within six years 58% had gone on to graduate school. By the time participants were interviewed at age 30, 73% of participants had either completed a graduate or professional degree or were in a degree program they were soon to finish.

Pursuit of a Dream or Opportunity Abroad

Nine percent of participants, all men, graduated and headed off either in pursuit of a particular dream, or in pursuit of an opportunity to immerse themselves in a new

culture abroad. A lower-income Black man was a varsity basketball player at Amherst and had always had: “a dream to play professional basketball.” Upon graduation he moved to Europe and “by the stroke of luck” got a contract and played professional basketball with a team in Copenhagen, Denmark. A lower-income White man went to work on a dairy farm making cheese. “I wanted to work on a farm and figured it wasn't something I would probably have a chance to do again when I had more life obligations.” He had studied Chinese while at Amherst and after working on a dairy farm, he worked a holiday retail job to earn money to enable him to go to China, where he got hired to teach English: “I wanted to be able to live abroad and actually work and integrate more in a community.”

He was not alone. Upon graduation an affluent White man first took an internship with the National Park Service in Yellowstone National Park because “I always loved Yellowstone, I loved the place and I wanted to live there, at least for a little while.” After four months when the internship ended he “wanted to travel and I wanted to live in a foreign country.” He took a position as an English teacher in Thailand for a year and then: “I spent five or so months traveling. I traveled around Southeast Asia; I traveled in Central America.” Another affluent White man, uncertain of his career goals, took a job in Spain as a teaching assistant in a nursery school. He wanted to “get to live abroad, experience a new culture and learn more about teaching and practice teaching.” He found it be a really important experience “because I couldn't speak the language well when I moved there. I relied a lot on the community to help me out. I needed people's help for easy things. And so that was humbling and important.”

Graduating Without a Job or Plan in Place

Twenty-three percent of participants graduated without a specific job in place, unclear about what they would be doing next.⁵ Similar percentages of Black (22%) and White (24%) participants graduated without a specific job in place. Percentages were similar for affluent (19%) and lower-income (27%) participants as well. Many of these participants moved home for financial and/or family reasons while they were looking for jobs. A lower-income White woman returned home to parents, “not being able to afford to live anywhere else, needing that support from them.” Similar comments came from participants in all groups: “The benefits are financial in that I could live there and not pay rent, and got to spend time with my family, which is nice” (affluent White man). “It is less expensive to stay home while I figure out my career. And I think those were the big motivating factors” (affluent Black woman). “[I] didn't have enough money to just have an apartment in New York and hang out while I looked for jobs” (affluent Black man).

Some participants who returned home to live with or near parents also spoke of the desire for the closeness and security of family as a home base for refueling while trying to figure out their next step in life. This reason was cited by 56% of the lower-

income Black participants who went home, and by a third of participants in the other three groups.⁶ A lower-income Black man said, "What brought me back was the feeling initially that I was losing a connection to a home base." An affluent White woman said, "It was a reassuring safety net to go back to a city that I was very familiar with, and still had a couple of friends from growing up, and have my family, and had a place where I could live if I needed to." A lower-income Black woman put it this way:

I didn't really know where else to go, and hadn't really thought it out, and also wanted to travel, and just had no real clue what I wanted my next steps to be. So, I was fortunately able to move home. ... I got to get my footing underneath [me] while figuring out my next steps. And I got to mature a little bit living at home and working and being with my friends in the area. And so that was really, really nice, and helped me get just settled so I could jump off to my next job or my next stages.

After a few years she moved on, finding being Black in her rural home community in a predominantly white state to be

just too racially isolating for me. And I just don't think that the opportunities are there. There's just not a lot of economic opportunity, like career opportunity. So it's like a push and pull where I want to be close to my family because that's where my whole family is, but I also don't want to live in a rural community.

Moving on or Returning Home

Thirty-eight percent of the participants in the study returned to the community in which they grew up to live and work after graduation.⁷ The lower-income White participants were the least likely to return home. Only 15% of these participants returned home. One possible explanation is that unlike the members of the other three groups, many more of the lower-income White participants came from smaller cities or towns in rural areas, or from towns where the industrial base no longer existed. Their home communities did not offer the type of job opportunities they were seeking.

Economics aside, the culture of home communities also factored into the decision of some lower-income participants not to return home. Many of these lower-income participants had changed and it was difficult for them to fit back in at home. A lower-income White woman and her husband were both lawyers who had grown up in rural South Dakota: "We very much wanted more of a city life and wanted to live in a blue state." A lower-income Black woman from the deep South began a PhD program in a large city up North immediately after graduation: "I really wanted to be in a big city. I

wanted the social life that comes with the big city. I knew that getting a PhD would be difficult, so having something in the neighborhood to do, to keep my mind or to reenergize was important.”

Participants were not asked how their *parents* felt about them following job opportunities, but some lower-income participants noted their parents had encouraged them to go where the job opportunities were, and understood their decision not to return to their home community. A lower-income White man who went on in finance said his parents “would not have been happy if I came back.” His mom told him, “I’m supposed to give you roots and wings.” A participant from a small township who became a doctor said his parents “wanted me to go on and do the things I wanted to do, and they knew that that meant not coming back.” A woman who came from a town in decline noted, “There’s not much industry left. ... There’s no career opportunities for me there.” Her parents, too, recognized that “I need to go where my career takes me and they’re supportive of that.” In encouraging their children to pursue opportunities for career success, parents could also have a price to pay. Their children would likely not be closely entwined in family life.

Some participants spoke of the decision not to return to their home communities after graduation with a sense of loss. A lower-income White man who went on in finance in a major city far from home mused, “I sometimes think most people that live in my home town don’t make a lot of money and I’m skeptical they’re putting much into their savings account, but they live a great lifestyle and they seem to be happy.” A lower-income White woman who did not go back due to the lack of job opportunities could see “the value of being in a smaller town, knowing more people, having a more tight-knit community, rather than being in a huge city where you’re anonymous all the time.”

Unlike the lower-income White participants, most of the participants from the other three groups came from urban areas – larger cities or their suburbs. Half of the affluent White participants returned to their home communities (46%). A striking contrast was found, however, between the affluent and lower-income Black participants. Three quarters (78%) of lower-income Black participants returned to their home communities, while only 22% of affluent Black participants did so. This is likely, in part, because 44% the affluent Black participants graduated with specific plans in place, i.e., jobs, internships, graduate school acceptance, while only 11% of the lower-income Black participants had plans in place.

Having been raised in urban areas gave those participants an awareness of the opportunities in cities as well as a resulting level of familiar comfort: “I’m from New York and I feel like to truly navigate the entertainment world it’s better to be in New York or L.A. So, it was definitely a plus for me to stay home” (affluent Black woman). “From well before the time I got into college I knew I wanted to work in politics, national security, and that means Washington” (affluent Black man from Oakland, CA). A lower-income Black man returned to his home community because he wanted “the experience being a

young professional growing up in a city that had a lot going on.” Some participants returned home and sought job opportunities when they got there, others returned home because they had already lined up job opportunities there.

Participants rated the importance of living close to parents or relatives on a five-point scale from “not at all important” to “very important.” Their mean score was 2.5, indicating living close to parents or relatives to be “slightly” to “moderately important.”⁸ Down the road, as more participants have children, the benefits of living near family may increase. Only two participants had children. A lower-income Black woman with two children had returned to work in her home community in Houston, but a few years later she was offered a great job opportunity in California. She and her husband found, “It was a little harder to raise two children without that additional support of family.” They returned to Houston for that and other reasons.

Being Overqualified for Jobs

In the first years after graduation, 40% of participants reported they had taken jobs for which they felt overqualified. Reasons ranged from needing the money while figuring out next steps or applying for desired jobs, waiting to hear from fellowships, or postponing going on to graduate school.⁹ This was true for participants from all four groups. Jobs they had taken included working at Macys, Old Navy, Whole Foods, and locally at Amherst Books, the Green Street Café, and Herrell’s Ice Cream. Other work included jobs as a secretary, a receptionist, a housekeeper, a barista. They could be found at a medical supply store, in a restaurant, sports bar, at an after-school program for kids. Participants babysat and nannied, tutored for SATs, and a bi-lingual participant did translation work.

In some cases, participants took these jobs to support themselves while they worked at a desired but underpaid or unpaid internship. While working at an internship, an affluent Black woman “also worked part time in a few different restaurants and coffee shops.” A lower-income White woman had worked 20 to 30 hours per week at a sports bar to support herself during graduate school and to avoid taking out loans. Some participants took jobs they were overqualified for to further network or provide experience toward their future careers. That is what motivated a lower-income Black man to take a temp position at the Sloan School of Business at MIT: “Really it was a glorified paper shuffling job. But I thought I would be able to make some connections at MIT and perhaps find some work in Boston or Cambridge.”

Marriage and Parenthood

Role transitions like marriage and parenthood were once markers of adulthood, but the age of marriage and parenthood have risen considerably over the past 50 years.¹⁰ These demographic transitions are no longer indicative of people's personal conceptions of whether they have become an adult.¹¹ If one were to use marriage and parenthood as markers of adulthood, the majority of participants in this study at age 30 had not reached it. Just under a third of the participants (31%) were married. Another 27% were living with someone in "a marriage-like relationship." When participants were asked if these "marriage-like relationships" would lead to marriage, many were uncertain. The other 42% of participants had never been married and were not currently living with someone in a committed relationship. Marriage rates did not differ by social class, but twice as many White participants had gotten married as Black participants (40% versus 22%). The lowest marriage rate was found among affluent Black participants (11%).¹²

Participants rated the importance to them of being married on a five-point scale from "not at all important" to "extremely important." No race or social class differences emerged.¹³ The mean score for the sample was 2.84, indicating that most participants felt it was "moderately important" to them to get married.

Only two participants, both of whom were married and working professional jobs, had become parents. Both were lower-income Black – a woman with two children and a man with one. When participants rated the importance of having children, the overall mean score for the sample was 2.89 indicating that most participants felt it was "moderately important." Most of the participants were getting settled in their careers and investing an enormous amount of time in their work. They were not yet married and the decision about parenthood lay down the road. But many who did want to become parents were uncertain about how children would fit into their lives. An affluent White man said, "My wife and I probably want to have children, probably just one child. It's up for debate. I don't know. ... We talk a lot about how to manage and balance career and having kids, and how to sacrifice for that, because it's not an easy thing."

Central Components of Life at Age 30

When asked what an adult should be able to do well, Freud is famous for saying "to love and to work."¹⁴ Consistent with Freud's thinking, when asked about the most important components of their current lives, participants named love (i.e., close relationships) and work. Community service and leisure time activities, e.g., hobbies, exercise, reading for pleasure, etc., did not have an important place in many participants' lives.

Work

Ninety-one percent of participants reported that work not only consumed most of their lives, but was also the most important component. Work included current jobs or careers as well as the work of graduate school (e.g., courses, reading, writing papers, doing research, etc.). An affluent Black man was an outlier. He was currently working in China and reported spending much of his time focusing on his own happiness and well-being: "Most of my time and energy I would say goes into me honestly. ... I don't really have any aspirations at this point other than maintenance, maintain regular rhythm and scheduling."

Relationships

Nearly half (47%) the participants identified close relationships as a central component in their life structures.¹⁵ Close relationships included parents, romantic partners, children, siblings, and friends. In most cases, relationships took second place to work, but a small group of participants, all lower-income, reported devoting more energy to their close relationships than to their work. A lower-income Black man underscored the importance of relationships and said, "If I have to pick one [area] I want my energy to go more, it's into relationships. But I think it ebbs and flows. But I think it's probably true with me that relationships end up coming out number one." Other comments included: "I would say most of my time and energy definitely goes towards my lovely wife" (lower-income Black man). "I'd say relationships, friends and family and my boyfriend" (lower-income Black woman). "My relationship was a little bit rocky for a while a year ago. And a lot of my focus was on that and making that better and socially in that area. More recently most of my mental focus has been on my family" (lower-income White man).

Not only were close relationships of all kinds, i.e., lovers, family, friends, designated as a central component of participants' current lives, 47% wished they had more time for them. Typical comments included: "My work definitely takes over more of my life than I would like it to, and I do think my relationships suffer sometimes as a result" (affluent White woman). "There's a small sliver in there for romantic and platonic relationships" (lower-income White woman). Other participants wished they had more time for "romantic interests" (lower-income Black woman), or for family: "It would be nice to see my family more" (lower-income Black man).

A common wish that participants expressed was for more time with friends. A lower-income Black woman who worked very long hours felt the demands of her work made it difficult to spend time with her husband and even more so, her friends:

It's really hard to find balance. And I think being married helps me just not come home and go to sleep. But then I spend all my free time with my husband because I feel guilty about being at work all the time, which stops

me from spending free time with my friends because I want to share whatever little free time I have with him, which prohibits me from spending any of my free time with other people.

A lower-income White woman found “working as much as I am this year makes it harder on my relationship and my friendships. So, both my romantic relationship and my other relationships [suffer]. And I would like to see that change.” An affluent White man wished “I had a bigger community of friends who I saw more regularly.”

For some participants the desire for more time with friends was related to the communities they now lived in. An affluent White woman’s job led her to leave her home community and she missed spending time with old friends: “I’ve left my relationships and my community back in New York. And so, there’s certainly a sacrifice in just not being able to be with those people in person.” An affluent White man had moved around a lot, and was hoping “I’ll develop some of those community ties and relationships.”

Community Engagement

Almost all of the participants (89%) had been active in community service activities in the years after they graduated from Amherst, but by age 30, given their other commitments, community engagement was only a part of 14% of the affluent Black or White participants’ lives. By contrast, almost half of the lower-income White participants (46%), and three quarters of the lower-income Black participants (78%) were engaged in community service work at age 30.¹⁶ They worked for environmental causes, on homelessness, in soup kitchens, did mentoring, pro-bono work on immigration cases, fundraising, provided physicals to school children in need, served on the PTO, and helped with science fairs.

A quarter of the participants (26%) identified community engagement as a component of their lives that they wished they had more time for.¹⁷ A lower-income White woman said, “I wish I had more time to volunteer at the local animal shelter because I miss and really care about that.” A lower-income Black man talked about the time constraints that had gotten in the way of getting more involved in his community: “I would definitely love to be closer to football coaching or something. I used to be able to volunteer, but just the work schedule and all that stuff doesn’t really allow me to anymore.” An affluent White man was hoping he would have more time for “volunteer opportunities that I haven’t pursued.”

Leisure Time Activities

Given the investment participants were making in their work and relationships, little time was left for leisure activities. Exercising, sports, climbing and mountaineering,

hobbies, music, acts of self-care, and reading for pleasure had a significant place in only 21% of participants' lives.¹⁸

Fifty-six percent of participants wished they had more time for leisure pursuits.¹⁹ There were a lot of activities participants enjoyed, but only a few now were able to make time for them. One who had was an affluent White man who talked about his love of cooking: "I cook a lot. My family is a family of chefs. And I cook dinner every night and very seriously engage in cooking projects." More representative was an affluent Black woman who indicated a desire to partake in creative hobbies but felt limited by time and money: "I really enjoyed knitting and weaving and I really like learning how to make new things and then making them. I don't really have time or money to pursue those kinds of 'crafty' things." A lower-income Black woman hoped to indulge in more self-care: "One thing that I've been working on doing, taking time to do a lot more, is foster a relationship with myself and not get so lost in the hustle and bustle of 'get it done, get it done, get it done,' and what everybody else wants me to do, that I'm not taking time for myself." An affluent Black man was interested in engaging in more cultural and artistic events: "I think I'm losing out on some of the arts a little bit. I still play, I used to play guitar pretty regularly, avidly. And I'd go see blues music and jazz. That's fallen off a bit. And I would like to go to museums more, art museums." An affluent White man said, "I wish that I had a better-defined set of hobbies that I pursued more regularly and more passionately. Yeah, that's something I miss a lot. I used to play sports. I used to play music. And a lot of that has gone by the wayside."

Satisfaction with Work and Personal Life

On the survey, participants rated their overall satisfaction with their current work and personal lives. Results did not differ by race or class for satisfaction levels for either work or personal lives. Despite the various pressures and constraints, the overall mean ratings indicated participants were "satisfied" with both their jobs and personal lives.²⁰

Hopes and Fears for Their Futures

I questioned participants about their hopes and fears for the future in the spring of 2017, three years before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. An unparalleled economic meltdown has since taken place. As I work on this in May, 2020, with no vaccine in sight, it is unclear when or if life as we have known it will ever be the same. Thus, the hopes and fears participants expressed when they were interviewed would likely be greatly altered today. Here is what they reported at the time.

Looking to the future, participants were, in large measure, optimistic, but fears accompanied that optimism. Their fears were rooted in whether they would be able to

realize their hopes for the future. The hopes and fears fell into two main categories: attaining the traditional markers of adulthood (e.g., marriage, parenthood, establishing a career, building financial independence); and negotiating societal challenges. Most participants expressed hopes and fears that fell into more than one of these categories. Here is an example from a lower-income Black woman: "I have high hopes for my life. I hope to be settled in a job. I would love to have tenure at a research institution. I would like to be married and have kids, about three kids. I would like to buy a home by then. And yeah, just have a cookie-cutter lifestyle – go to work, come back home, hang out with kids. ... I'm afraid I might not find a romantic interest because where I go for my career would shut that off."

Attaining Traditional Markers of Adulthood

A central fear expressed by participants was that they might not be able to attain the traditional markers of adulthood. Seventy-two percent of participants expressed fears that centered on either love, i.e., getting married and becoming a parent, or work, i.e., progressing in a chosen career and thus attaining financial stability to enable home ownership. Results did not differ by race or class.²¹ Twenty-one percent of participants expressed hopes/fears about both love and work.

Career Progression and Satisfaction. A focus of 58% of the participants' hopes or fears was about progressing and finding satisfaction in their careers: "I hope to continue developing in my career and progressing in terms of reaching higher levels, even within my current institution or in other institutions, taking on more responsibility" (lower-income Black man). "I hope to ascend in the field I'm working in" (lower-income White man). "What's really important to me is to continue to grow and be successful in my career" (affluent White man). The fear expressed by an affluent White man who entered academia represented the opposite side of the coin: "I'm definitely scared about things not working out research-wise, not having good results or not getting tenure and stuff like that might be a little scary."

Participants' career hopes or fears also focused on finding satisfaction and fulfillment in their work. Participants expressed fears about: "having some type of career satisfaction" (lower-income White man), and hoped to "continue to be satisfied with my job" (affluent Black woman), "to have a fulfilling career" (affluent White woman), and to be "doing fulfilling work" (affluent Black man). For some participants, finding fulfillment in work meant doing work that was meaningful and that they were passionate about. The biggest hope for an affluent White man was "the work I do will become more meaningful, not just to me but to the world, and will have some kind of positive impact." A lower-income Black woman wanted to make a real contribution and "be renowned for something."

For some participants, satisfaction would come from work that could “fulfill passions” (affluent White woman). Some feared losing that passion. A lower-income White woman feared she was losing the “raw energy and passion and anger” that had been a part of her upbringing. An affluent White man hoped, “I don't lose the passion I have for working on the types of cases that I care about from a social and political point of view.”

Monetary Concerns. Some lower-income participants who had grown up without financial security had concerns about making enough money to establish stability in their lives. A lower-income Black woman said:

My fears are mostly related around money. ... I would like to make enough money and manage it well, and feel secure and not be stressed about buying groceries. I'd like to feel secure in my future. I would like to retire someday. So, I think that most of my fears have to do with money and just making sure that I'm financially sound.

For some, those concerns centered on making enough money to provide for a family. The hope for a lower-income Black man was to “be able to support my family.” A lower-income White man feared, “I won't be successful in my professional career and be able to make enough money to support my family.”

For some lower-income participants, their hope of making enough money entailed being able to buy a house and attain better living conditions than their families had when they were growing up. A lower-income Black woman who had children reported:

My biggest dream is actually to own a home. Growing up my family never owned a home. And so that's something that I want for my girls. ... The biggest fear is maybe ending up in the same situation that I got out of, having my girls grow up the same way that I did, moving around a lot and not really having a consistent household, not having a two-parent household. Those are things that I try to actively make sure that they don't grow up with.

Not surprisingly, more of the lower-income than affluent participants had taken on debt to pay for their graduate school or professional education (80% versus 34%). I did not ask participants whether they had family money to cover much of the cost of graduate or professional school. The amount of debt participants took on varied greatly and ranged from \$10,000 to \$250,000.²² The greatest amount of debt was to pay for degrees in law and medicine, occupations where participants would eventually have the capacity to pay off their loans. A small group of participants, both affluent and lower-income expressed fear

about paying off their debt. The concern of an affluent White man was: "How do I retain the things I came into law to do, while also paying the enormous amount of money I owe the federal government." The biggest fear and the biggest hope for a lower-income Black woman centered around paying off debt: "Right now, I'm very focused on money and working on paying off all of my loans. And I hope to maybe eventually start my own business."

Other Work-related Concerns. A few other work-related concerns were the causes of participants' hopes and fears. Several participants were without clear career goals and had fears around future jobs. A lower-income White woman felt, "very insecure about what kinds of jobs I might hold in the future." For an affluent White woman who had started a successful non-profit, her concern was not about what to do but rather about whether her non-profit would survive. She faced "a lot of unknowns in terms of funding and long-term sustainability. So, I fear, I definitely am constantly stressed about whether this organization will continue to exist."

Marriage and Parenthood. A focus of 35% of the participants hopes and fears was around marriage and parenthood. As expressed by an affluent Black woman: "All of my hopes and fears are relationship oriented," which for many meant finding the right partner and then getting married. A lower-income Black man hoped to "have a happy family first and foremost." For a lower-income White woman: "My biggest hope and also my biggest fear right now relates to having a family. I would really like to have children. And I turned 30 a few months ago and I'm starting to be concerned about when that will, or can happen." A lower-income White man working very long hours hoped to "be a dad and have a family. ... I know that that's something I want in my life, but it's been very hard for me to connect the dots. And I'm always, 'Okay, it'll happen eventually.'" A lower-income White man expressed concern with what psychologist Erik Erikson called generativity, which involves caring for and nurturing the next generation:²³ "I really want there to be something in my life to nurture. So, whether that means children or whether that means taking a more active role in my godchildren's lives or my nephew's life or adopting I don't know. But just something to nurture or teach."

Negotiating Societal Challenges

The second major category of participants' hopes and fears for their futures, expressed by 58% of participants, centered on how well they would be able to negotiate a number of societal challenges, with achieving a work-life balance as the number one concern.²⁴

Attaining Work-life Balance. Many of the participants had entered occupations that demanded very long work hours that spilled into evenings and weekends. Thirty-seven percent expressed fears about attaining a balance between work and other dimensions of their lives. A lower-income Black woman reflected, “I thought I would have work-life balance. And I don't even know what that is right now. I thought I was just going to be working a 9:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday. I work all the time now.”

Participants worried about whether they would be able to devote themselves to their careers, as they currently did, and still have time for a family, parenthood, other relationships, and other interests. The hope for an affluent White woman was that “I will get married and have kids, but still be able to maintain a career and a job that I really love.” A lower-income Black man echoed her concerns: “I hope to be able to balance my work and personal life and give enough time to each.” Participants hoped, too, that work would not preclude time for other interests. A lower-income White woman hoped to “work at a place that had less insane hours so I could have hobbies again, where I could actually make friends where I live.” An affluent Black woman hoped to “find more balance between work and other things I like to do.”

The more fearful side of the coin was not being able to attain a balance. An affluent White woman put her fear this way: “My family life or my career will suffer from trying to do both. So, either not be able to be a good parent and be around, or I'll have to switch jobs or start working less in order to achieve that.” Others expressed similar concerns: “I am fearful that I will end up working too much, that I won't be able to be around my future family as much as I'd like” (lower-income White man). “I would like to continue working even after I have kids, and I don't know how easy it will be at the law firm to find time to have a kid. And then also I'd like to be a good mom and I don't know how I can find that balance” (lower-income White woman).

The Political Climate. Some participants expressed fear about how the current political climate might impact their future. The interviews were conducted in 2017. President Trump had taken office, setting the country on a very different course than the previous administration. Given participants' liberal political leanings, described in a later chapter, the Trump administrations' disdain for science, denial of climate change, and hatred of immigrants and minorities were a cause of fear for many participants. A lower-income White man said, “The thing that stresses me out the most right now are politics.” In the words of affluent Black man: “We're entering into a hostile environment for science. It can manifest in actual funding that people get. But also, just the skepticism of scientific consensus is really concerning. And I'm a little worried about pursuing a career in science in that climate. It may even push me into a more business side of it.” Some Black participants expressed concerns about raising children in the current racial climate. An affluent Black man reflected, “I don't really want to have kids in this world or what the world is becoming.” An affluent Black woman worried about “how to protect” her

children. A lower-income Black man explained, “my fear would be to have a family where I can't protect them from what's going on outside.”

One Last Concern – Parents

A few participants expressed fears about what lay in store for their parents in the future. An affluent Black woman shared her fear that “my parents won't be around forever to see all the things I'm going to do.” An affluent Black woman said, “I do worry about my parents getting older and what will happen with taking care of them because they live so far away.” The mother of a lower-income White man was in declining health and he worried about “the way that my dad will be affected by things going on with my mom.”

Discussion

This chapter looked at the paths that participants traveled from graduation to age 30. Race and class played little role in the paths they followed – whether they had jobs in place when they graduated, worked jobs they were overqualified for, or the timing of entering graduate school. Many participants had a pretty good idea of the fields they wanted to enter when they graduated, but did not follow a straight path to that end. Part of the reason may have been that the Class of 2009 entered the workforce at the peak of the Great Recession. Previous offers were being withdrawn, hiring freezes were in place, and new job listings dropped precipitously. It was typical for participants to spend a year or two working or traveling abroad, working for service programs like Teach for America or the Mississippi Teacher Corps, taking jobs or internships to build their skills and resumes to prepare for desired jobs, or taking jobs they were overqualified for to sustain themselves until they were able to get the kind of job opportunities they desired. As the years went by though, more and more participants got connected to desired jobs or went on to graduate school to get the credentials needed to do the type of work they wished to do.

Turning to relationships, the age of first marriage in this country has risen steadily since the mid-20th century, and for most emerging adults who graduate from college, marriage and parenthood are still years away. That proved true for the study participants. At age 30 only a third of the participants were married, and only two had children. Twice as many White as Black participants had married, consistent with national data. Black men and women have the highest median age of marriage compared to other racial groups, age 32 for men and 30.4 for women.²⁵ Also, Black women nationally are less likely to get married and tend to marry later in life across all levels of education.²⁶

At this point in their lives, on average, participants said both marriage and parenthood were only “moderately important” to them.

Race and class also had little effect on the structure of participants’ lives at age 30, or on their satisfaction with their work or personal lives. Participants’ work or graduate education consumed most of their time and they expressed satisfaction with their jobs at this early point in their chosen careers. Participants’ close relationships were the second most important element in their life structures. While participants on average felt satisfied with their personal lives, nearly half the participants (47%) also wished they had more time to devote to those close relationships – with partners, family and friends. Few affluent participants, Black or White, made time for volunteer activities, but 78% of the lower-income Black and 46% of the lower-income White participants did so. This may be because the lower-income participants were more highly identified with people in need, or, given their appreciation of the socioeconomic privilege they had gained, had a desire to give back. Less than a quarter of the participants (21%) had time for hobbies, reading, sports, exercise, music, self-care or other leisure time activities, and over half (56%) wished for more such time.

For the most part, race and class differences were not found in participants’ hopes and fears for the future. Looking ahead, almost three quarters (72%) of the participants’ hopes centered on work – achieving success and satisfaction in their chosen careers, making enough money to have financial stability, pay off debt and buy a home, as well as on love – forming committed relationships, marrying, having a family. The other major hope was that they would be able to negotiate societal challenges – the major challenge being attaining a work-life balance. Less prominent fears centered on the Trump administration’s disdain for science and hatred of immigrants and minorities. Some Black participants voiced worry about having children they could not protect. Overall, participants faced the future with optimism. Their life trajectories had been impressive, and their experiences gave them a confidence and belief that they would eventually reap the rewards of their efforts.

Moving forward, according to psychologist Erik Erikson, the focus on themselves will widen to include establishing and helping guide the next generation – caring for family and beyond, mentoring others, contributing to making the world a better place through their productivity, leadership and creativity.²⁷ The challenges these participants now face due to the coronavirus pandemic and a global recession or depression are much greater than those they imagined when they were interviewed. However, what Erikson took as normative for this next stage of their lives still applies. As adult members of society they are needed to contribute to the recovery of society through their productivity, leadership, and creativity.

Notes

¹ Arnett (2000; 2015).

² Sixty-two percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 50% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 78% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported following a job or internship upon graduation. A χ^2 test was not calculated because three cells had expected values less than five.

³ <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/types-of-awards/english-teaching-assistant-awards> (accessed April 7, 2020).

⁴ For total number of jobs participants held for at least six months: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.79$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.76$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.24$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.89$, $SD = 2.52$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 45) = 0.35$, $p = 0.560$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.008$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(3, 45) = 1.32$, $p = 0.257$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.031$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 45) = 0.16$, $p = 0.696$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.030$.

⁵ Twenty-three percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 33% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 25% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) graduated without a specific plan. A χ^2 test was not calculated because three cells had expected values less than five.

⁶ Thirty-nine percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 33% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 22% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) participants cited family reasons for returning to their home communities. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

⁷ Fifteen percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 78% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 46% of affluent White ($N = 11$), and 22% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) participants returned to their home communities. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

⁸ For importance of living close to parents or relatives: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.01$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.12$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.50$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.12$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 45) = 0.002$, $p = 0.964$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(3, 45) = 0.96$, $p = 0.333$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.023$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 45) = 0.002$, $p = 0.964$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.000$.

⁹ Thirty-nine percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 44% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 42% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 33% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported having taken jobs for which they were overqualified for the money. A χ^2 test was not calculated because three cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁰ See <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/time-series/demo/families-and-households/ms-2.pdf> (accessed April 27, 2020) for data on age of marriage. See https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_01.pdf (accessed April 27, 2020) for data on age of first childbirth.

¹¹ Arnett (2000, 2015).

¹² Twenty-nine percent of lower-income White ($N = 14$), 33% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 46% of affluent White ($N = 13$), and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) had gotten married. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹³ For the importance of marriage: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.04$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.36$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.12$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.39$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 41) = 0.003$, $p = 0.954$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(3, 41) = 0.29$, $p = 0.592$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 41) = 0.13$, $p = 0.724$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$.

¹⁴ Erikson (1968), p. 136.

¹⁵ Forty-six percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 50% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 33% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported relationships were an important part of their life structures. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁶ Forty-six percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 78% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 17% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported currently doing community service work. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁷ Thirty-one percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 22% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 33% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported community engagement was an important component left out of their life structures. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁸ Twenty-three percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 33% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 17% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported sports, hobbies etc. were an important part of their life structures. A χ^2 test was not calculated because two cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁹ Sixty-two percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 75% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 22% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported sports, hobbies etc. were an important component left out of their life structures. A χ^2 test was not calculated because two cells had expected values less than five.

²⁰ Job satisfaction was rated on a four-point scale from 1 = "very dissatisfied" to 4 = "very satisfied." For job satisfaction: for lower-income White participants $N = 12$, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.78$; for affluent White participants $N = 12$, $M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.62$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 8$, $M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.76$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.52$. The overall mean was 3.5. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 40) = 0.438$, $p = 0.512$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.012$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(3, 40) = 0.223$, $p = 0.639$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.006$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 40) = 1.510$, $p = 0.227$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.040$. Personal life satisfaction was rated on a five-point scale from 1 = "very dissatisfied" to 5 = "very satisfied." For personal life satisfaction: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.83$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 4.46$, $SD = 0.52$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.78$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.78$. The overall mean was 4.1. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 41) = 1.433$, $p = 0.238$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.034$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(3, 41) = 0.142$, $p = 0.708$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$.

There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 41) = 1.433$, $p = 0.238$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.034$.

²¹ Sixty-nine percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 78% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 58% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 89% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) mentioned the attainment of traditional markers of adulthood among their fears for the future. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five. correct

²² Fifty-five percent of lower-income participants had taken on \$16,000 to \$73,000 in debt, 18% had taken on \$115,000 to \$130,000 in debt, while the remaining 27% had taken on between \$150,000 and \$250,000 in debt, in all cases to pay for law school or medical school. For the affluent participants who took loans, 43% percent had taken on \$10,000 to \$60,000 in debt. The other 57% had taken on \$170,000 - \$215,000 in debt, in all cases to pay for law school.

²³ Erikson (1968).

²⁴ Fifty-four percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 33% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 75% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 67% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) mentioned societal challenges among their fears for the future. A χ^2 test was not calculated because two cells had expected values less than five. correct

²⁵ Payne (2019).

²⁶ Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra (2015).

²⁷ The participants are moving into the seventh of Erikson's eight stages of development – Generativity versus Stagnation (Erikson, 1968).

3

The Changing Understanding of Race and Whiteness

White people tend to view racism as an issue people of color have to struggle with, not one that personally implicates them.¹ Yet fundamentally, racism is an issue created and perpetuated by White people. In order to dismantle the system of racial inequality in this country, it is essential to understand White people's racial viewpoints about themselves and racial inequality. The present chapter examines White participants' changing understanding of whiteness and race from entry to college to age 30.

Psychologists have looked at racism at the individual level, and conceptualized it in terms of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. They have shown that negative racial stereotypes are ubiquitous and strongly socialized in our society, that White people almost inevitably possess negative attitudes towards Black people,² and hold explicit stereotypes as well as implicit ones that reside outside of conscious awareness.³ These racial biases are manifested daily in the form of microaggressions, which are brief, commonplace, intentional or unintentional "hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults."⁴ Examples of microaggressions include a White female student crossing the street at night when a Black student approaches, sending the message he is potentially criminal; or a White student asking a Black male student what sport he plays, expressing the assumption he gained admission based on his athletic talent, not his academic ability. In their strongest form, microaggressions can take the form of micro-assaults – explicit racial derogation intended to hurt the victim, or purposeful discriminatory action.

A very different understanding of racism comes from critical race theory (CRT), which grew out of legal studies, and has made its way into the fields of sociology, history, and education. CRT views race and racism as endemic and systemic, and looks historically at how a system of racial advantage has been ingrained in the American legal and social structures that continue to favor White people.⁵ Critical race theorists question the dominant ideology that defines racism as *discriminatory treatment*, and hold that the

attribution of racism to individuals conceals *systemic racism*. Historian Ibram Kendi has defined racism as the marriage of racist policies and racist ideas. By racist policies he meant written or unwritten laws, rules, procedures put in place by White people that have a differential and discriminatory effect on racial minorities. By racist ideas he meant ideas used to justify and promote racial inequalities that grant privilege to those who are White and that discriminate against people of color.⁶

Research has shown that many White people tend to perceive racism at the individual level, and fail to see systemic racism. Sociologist Douglas Hartmann and his colleagues found that only 37.5% of White people believed laws and institutions contributed to African American disadvantage, while 88.2% attributed White advantage to effort and hard work or differences in family upbringing.⁷ By contrast, in the same study 66.1% of non-White participants believed that laws and institutions contributed to African American disadvantage.

CRT frames racism as a White problem and positions White people as a key to the elimination of racial oppression.⁸ From this perspective, as long as institutional and structural racism and white privilege remain obscured or invisible for White people,⁹ they will not feel they are not part of the problem.¹⁰ Nor will they be motivated to work for racial justice.

My data set provided the opportunity to examine White participants' understanding of race, racial inequality and their own racial privilege over the 12-year period from the beginning of college to age 30. Did their views change over four years at Amherst given the opportunity to interact with racially diverse peers? Did their views change further as they moved into new contexts post-graduation?

This research has important implications for the role higher education might play in educating students about racism and racial inequality. Amherst graduates will become citizens in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-racial society. Many will move into positions of influence. If White graduates leave the college without an understanding of racism and their role, intentional or unintentional, in perpetuating it, they are unlikely to work to eradicate it. The topic also has important implications for the role they, as parents, will play in socializing their children. The messages they pass on to their children about racial inequality will help determine whether those children perpetuate it or work to eradicate it.

White participants were asked in various ways to describe their experience of whiteness and to explain their racial viewpoints at the start of college, then four years later when almost all were graduating seniors, and finally at age 30. When the study was framed, White participants' understanding of whiteness and race were not a central focus. Had it been, identical questions would have been asked at each time. Unfortunately, the exact questions were not repeated in the two follow-up studies. However, a variety of questions *were* asked at each point in time that shed light on these issues.

As their first semester at Amherst began, participants were asked three questions regarding race: whether race was an aspect of themselves they had thought about before coming to Amherst, what differences they thought race had made in their lives or the things they had done, and what things were made easier or harder in their lives because of their race. In the interviews at the end of four years at the college, participants were asked whether their experience at Amherst, of living and interacting with people from different racial backgrounds had changed the way they saw people of their own race or other races. They were also asked whether they had perceived incidents of racism on campus.

At age 30 participants were asked to reflect on their learning about race during college, and whether any particular experiences with people of other racial and ethnic groups at Amherst had changed their ideas about race, race relations, or about other racial or ethnic groups. They were asked whether they learned something at Amherst about the privileges associated with being White and what the source of that learning was, e.g., courses, professors, classmates, staff, speakers. Further, participants were asked if they were more or less aware of race and racism day-to-day than they were upon graduating from Amherst, how much thought they gave to racial inequalities in their day-to-day life, and what those thoughts were. Finally, participants were asked what messages they would want to give their children about race or racism if and when they became parents. None had children at that point. These interviews at age 30 enable us to see how participants' views may have changed since graduation as they became immersed in new environments, were exposed to new life experiences, beliefs, and societal changes.

In going over the transcripts of White participants and trying to understand and categorize their thinking over the years, I realized that a conceptual framework was needed to accomplish the task at hand. The following analysis of white racial identity draws on a model developed by sociologist Kenneth Fasching-Varner, which assumes that white racial identity exists even if White people are unaware of its existence.¹¹ Fasching-Varner postulated a framework made up of many characteristics of whiteness that individuals may possess at a given point in time. Characteristics a person possesses at one point in time might remain present over time but may take a less prominent position at other points in time.¹² While Fasching-Varner derived a particular set of characteristics from a small sample of White participants, rather than relying on his, my honors student Rosy Rohling and I examined participants' transcripts over the 12 years of the study to see what themes emerged as participants talked about the ways in which they understood whiteness and racial inequality.

Six Aspects of White Racial Identity

Reading through the three waves of data, we derived six inter-related aspects of white racial identity from participants' descriptions of their racial viewpoints. These aspects of identity cannot be understood as stages, for at any of the three moments in time studied, more than one aspect of an individual's white racial identity was likely to be present, and each aspect could change in prominence over time. The six aspects were labeled: 1) *the invisibility of whiteness*, 2) *color-blind racism*, 3) *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination*, 4) *recognition of white privilege*, 5) *visibility of systemic racism*, and 6) *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities*.

Depending on participants' racial experiences prior to entering college, different aspects of their White racial identities were salient at the start of college. When participants first arrived, *the invisibility of whiteness* and *color-blind racism* were prominent for those who had grown up in a largely White world. *Color-blind racism* is marked by diminishing the importance of race, resulting in a failure to recognize the disadvantaged position people of color hold in society. The *visibility of systemic racism* and a *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities* were absent in most participants' White racial identities. Some aspects like *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination* and *recognition of white privilege* had low salience at the start of college for many participants but gained prominence over time due to their exposure to non-White peers at college, to coursework on race, and to exposure to new environmental influences after graduation from college. One other important point – because the participants were not questioned *directly* about the aspects of white racial identity that were later derived, the percentage of participants for whom each aspect was present might have been higher had participants been questioned directly about it. For example, participants were not asked about their *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities*. That theme emerged because some participants described doing so through their work. It is possible that other participants might be speaking out about or working to change policies and practices that disadvantage people of color in organizations for which they worked. Now for a closer examination of the findings on the six aspects of white racial identity.

The Invisibility of Whiteness

On entering college, race carried little importance to the identities of many of the White participants. A dominant theme found in participants' responses was *the invisibility of whiteness*. For nearly half the participants (48%) being White was an aspect of themselves to which they had given little or no thought. *The invisibility of whiteness* was most prominent among participants who had grown up in almost entirely white communities and had little prior experience interacting with people of color. Typical of their comments were, "[I] never had to think about [race]", "You're White. You don't think about race", "Everyone is the same. ... I never had to think about it."

When asked at that time whether they thought things were made easier or harder in their lives because they were White, 38% of the participants responded that race had not affected their lives, e.g., "I don't think my race has affected anything." Characteristic answers included, "I don't think that race has had a large impact at all in my life", "[being White] hasn't been instrumental in making me who I am." Some participants recognized that race *might* have made a difference in their lives, but had a hard time articulating what that might even have been, e.g. "I'm sure it has made a difference but I haven't consciously noticed it", "It's probably made a difference to who I am, but I haven't felt affected by it at all. I have no idea."

When interviewed at the end of college, one participant from a predominantly White community reflected back almost apologetically on *the invisibility of whiteness*:

In freshman year I didn't see myself as having a race. I feel sometimes you do that, you're like, 'Oh, I'm White,' which is like an absence of race, which it's not at all. And it's almost offensive to think that, but I think the concept of race didn't really seem a big deal to me at all freshman year and I remember thinking from the first interview, 'I've never thought of any of this before.'

Although by the end of college *the invisibility of whiteness* became less prominent in participants' responses, it still remained a prominent aspect in many participants' thinking: "Race isn't something that I think a ton about. Being at [college] it probably made me a little bit more aware." The majority said they had not noticed racism on campus but 44% had observed primarily "small instances" of racism, e.g., they had heard someone use the N-word, or heard, "jokes that cross the line or that are inappropriate." Yet Black participants had a different experience with racism over their four years at Amherst. Over three-quarters had perceived racism on campus.¹³ It is interesting to note that three of the participants who at one point in their interviews said they had not seen race as a big deal on campus also reported observing racism at *some other point* in their interviews. Witnessing racism at moments seemed to have had little lasting impact on their overall racial awareness. The presence of contradictory views in a single interview was a pattern found for many participants.

Participants were asked at age 30 on the survey: "How closely do you identify with your race?" Race played only a small role in self-definition for White participants. On a 4-point scale from "not at all closely" to "very closely," the mean score for White participants was 1.92, indicating they identified only "a little" with being White. In contrast, the mean for Black participants was 3.33, indicating they identified "somewhat closely" to "very closely" with being Black.¹⁴ As was the case at the end of college, race remained largely invisible in most White participants' day-to-day lives. A participant who returned to live in her predominantly White home community noted, "I don't think

about race when I interact with people at all. And that's because I'm White and I'm in a predominately White community, so it just isn't part of the interactions until somebody says something really racist." Those racist comments may have stripped away *the invisibility of whiteness*, but only momentarily. Another noted that race and racial equalities were "not something that I really think that affects me all that much."

The presence of police violence against Black people had become a focus of media attention from the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida to the 2014 killings of Eric Garner in New York City, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio. Thus, many participants' thoughts turned to race more frequently. However, their thoughts about acts of violence against Black people could quickly be put out of mind: "I'm 100% aware of it, but I don't think about it. It's not really a part of my professional life. When I watch the news, I think about it." One participant read things about police violence and racial inequality, but said, "It's recently more in like 'oh this sucks' way than feeling particularly engaged or I want to go do what I can to fix them." Most participants did not see themselves as implicated in these racial problems, and the visibility of systemic racism quickly left consciousness and became largely imperceptible.

Color-blind Racism

At the start of college, a second prominent aspect of some participants' White racial identities was *color-blind racism*, which was often present in their narratives along with *the invisibility of whiteness*. While the *invisibility of whiteness* pertains specifically to the participants' failure to see or give importance to one's own race, *color-blind racism* is marked by overlooking race. And along with that comes the failure to acknowledge, wittingly or unwittingly, the disadvantaged position people of color hold in society.

Historically, in the 1950s and 1960s at the time of the Civil Rights Movement, being color-blind was seen by many as a positive way of dealing with race. The ideal was to create a society in which skin color would be insignificant. To be color-blind meant being race neutral and not a racist. But today color-blindness is viewed quite differently. For sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, the result is what he calls color-blind racism, a powerful ideology characterized by a raceless explanation of race-related matters that justifies the current racial order and perpetuates the racial status quo.¹⁵ At the core of this ideology is the belief that the racial inequalities that exist are *not* due to racism. For example, color-blind racists see racial segregation as a natural occurrence. They imagine that Black people *choose* to live with one another, just as White people do, failing to see that Black people have historically been forced to live in restricted areas, unable to rent or buy properties in White neighborhoods. Another manifestation of color-blind racism identified by Bonilla-Silva is White people's use of the notion of equal opportunity and merit to oppose programs like affirmative action. For color-blind racists, affirmative

action represents preferential treatment for people of color. They see such programs as unfair and discriminatory towards Whites, thus disregarding the inequalities between Black and White individuals that affirmative action was set up to address.¹⁶ Bonilla-Silva argues, "Whites appear 'reasonable' and 'moral' while opposing all kinds of interventions to deal with racial inequality."¹⁷

Participants' expressions of color-blind racism took several forms at the start of college. A few participants (17%) spoke explicitly of being socialized not to see race: "I was just raised 'people are people,' so I never really thought one way or the other about race", "I was really raised to just believe a person is a person. And race isn't really a factor." Another noted, "I'm color-blind, which is this generic way of saying I don't think about race." These participants tried not to notice race and/or let race affect their judgments of others and had no sense that they had a white racial identity. Their failure to see race, however, meant they also failed to see racial inequality.

Another manifestation of color-blind racism identified above was some White participants' opposition to affirmative action. Freshman year, 30% of participants expressed the belief that their lives had been made *more difficult* because they were White. One participant complained:

What makes me furious is how some minorities are given what seem like more advantages and more benefits and more opportunities than people who aren't considered minorities. And because I'm not considered a minority maybe that caused me to not get into some of the schools that I applied to. I feel that there's reverse discrimination.

Others in that initial first-year interview voiced the same grievance. A participant was upset at people of color in her high school class "who got into schools that I applied to and we had the same SATs and GPA, and we did a lot of the same activities, and I think our essays were just about on par, and they would get in, and then I didn't." Another participant felt disadvantaged as a White applicant for an internship at NASA upon discovering: "There were two internships, one for students from minority backgrounds and one for everyone else. And the students from minority backgrounds got a much higher stipend than we did." These participants seemed unaware of the system of racial advantage that had historically benefitted White people and disadvantaged people of color, and that these programs were attempts to achieve equity. Equity involves treating everyone *fairly* as opposed to equality, which means treating everyone *the same*. Equity ensures that those who have not had *the same* opportunities get the opportunities they need.

This color-blind ideology remained a salient aspect in some participants' thinking as graduating seniors, although considerably less than as first-year students. Eighteen percent of participants spoke of disadvantages associated with being White. That first

participant cited above who had been furious about reverse discrimination brought about by affirmative action retained the same beliefs. She had surrounded herself with like-minded friends during college and described a conversation she had with her good friends:

We believe that affirmative action is going to the other extreme and that now we feel like Whites are being prejudiced against almost. So we just feel that everything should be totally equal regardless of race and that affirmative action at first it was necessary so that Blacks, I'm talking like decades ago, so that Blacks could raise their social standing, but that now things should just be equal.

Resentment appeared about being disadvantaged in the job market. One participant believed that being White had "actually closed opportunities." This participant had interviewed with Morgan Stanley for a job he really wanted the previous year. He had gotten feedback through a connection with the interviewer that he did a great job and should have gotten the position, but one of the two positions was restricted to an African American. The position went to: "a kid who I know, I'm in a lot of classes with, and wasn't nearly as qualified as I am." Likewise, another participant saw himself as disadvantaged by affirmative action: "I went up against a kid who has the same exact qualifications as I have, same background, came from a wealthy family, but was of a different race and got the job solely because of that." The participant was told by the interviewer that they had to meet a quota: "So I was just shocked almost. But I'm sure it's worked in my favor sometimes too." This last remark is an example of the contradictory views that participants might hold and express in the interviews. While perceiving affirmative action as unfair and discriminatory towards White people, he had some recognition that being White worked to his benefit "sometimes." However, that awareness held less salience.

For a few participants, *color-blindness* did lose salience as an aspect of their white racial identity over the course of college. For example, one participant who had been taught: "We should be trying to strive toward the color-blind society, and that if we just don't talk about [race] then it won't be a problem," had come to believe that that message was "highly problematic." Another participant who had been taught to be color-blind realized race really existed and that race was "a huge factor affecting experience."

At age 30, the White participants were asked what messages they would want to give their children about race and racism, if they were to have children in the future. A few participants specifically articulated a color-blind message that downplayed the relevance of race, or ignored race all together: "I would want [our children] to not see people have inherently different qualities based on their race, and just know that it's just a race and everyone's worth getting to know as well", "I would want to teach them that

no matter what color or background people come from, you should judge them based on who they are as a person and not what they look like.” In diminishing the importance of race, these messages failed to acknowledge the advantaged position they held and the disadvantaged position held by people of color. They contrast greatly with the message given by another participant: “I’m not going to give my kids the message that they should be color-blind or pretend that race doesn’t exist. I want them to be aware that it exists and be aware of the way that it affects different people who aren’t them.”

Awareness of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Another important aspect of participants’ White racial identities involved the level of *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination* towards people of color. At the start of college, the *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination* held low salience for many participants. Participants who came to college from predominantly White communities had little direct experience with people of color and only a modest understanding of the extent to which people of color actually *were* the targets of racial stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. One participant said, “I’m not sure which stereotypes are true, and which aren’t, because I’m not Black. I certainly don’t experience any of those sorts of stereotypes.” Another participant was aware that a few high school classmates: “probably did face discrimination,” but was not too aware of it: “because I haven’t had to face the problems with it.” Some participants were again inconsistent, saying they were not too aware of discrimination, but recognizing at another point in the interview that Black classmates probably did face discrimination.

Based on the common understanding of racism as prejudice or discrimination toward someone based on race, participants saw themselves as not racists. Most were not aware that they might unconsciously possess racial stereotypes or prejudice, or might have unintentionally displayed discriminatory behavior. One participant described laughing with friends at a racist joke, but later in the interview reported, “I definitely don’t consider myself a racist or judging people by color.” Another reported, “I’m not explicitly racist or classist. I don’t think I am in any material way.” A third reported feeling that: “because I’m White in a town that’s stereotyped as being racist that I have this image of being racist...without actually doing anything.”

After four years at college with racially diverse peers, *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination* towards people of color increased in prominence. It took two different forms. Over a third of the participants (39%) reported becoming more aware of the extent to which stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination were real and impacted the lives of people of color. The most powerful learning for these participants came from hearing Black friends share experiences of discrimination they and their family members had been subjected to: “From an intellectual standpoint I know that racism exists and

everything, but I think it just brings it closer to home a little bit hearing [my Black friend] talk about it, and it's like yeah, that really *does* happen." However, hearing these racial narratives did not increase participants' awareness of the stereotypes or prejudice *they* had internalized.

The second change in awareness was deeper and was experienced by 16% of the participants. These participants learned about stereotypes *they*, along with other White people internalized. Their White racial identities now encompassed an understanding of themselves as the holder of racial stereotypes and prejudice. Through her friendships with Black peers, one participant came to see what "a very stereotypical version of urban, inner-city Black poor" she herself had grown up with and how inaccurate her stereotype was. Another learned through coursework in Black Studies that: "Everyone has unconscious, subconscious assumptions. No matter how tolerant you may think you are, everyone has those implicit thoughts and stereotypes." Others reached a similar, discomforting self-awareness: "I think I still have pretty significant stereotypes about Blacks that need to be broken down, despite the fact that I'm very close friends with a lot of Black people", "I'm finding all the time repressed things and stereotypes that I haven't necessarily confronted."

By age 30 *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination* had greatly increased in prominence. A central message most White participants (52%) wanted to convey to their children was to be aware of the internalization of racial stereotypes, and of prejudice and discrimination against people of color. Some participants focused on educating their children about discrimination: "I want them to be aware that it exists and be aware of the way that it affects different people who aren't them" (affluent White woman). "It's really important to know how important racism is" (affluent White man). "[Racism] is a thing that happens and you should always be aware of that and prevent it where possible" (affluent White man).

For a few participants, their message included explicitly teaching their children to be conscious of their own racial biases so they would not use them to judge people. One participant felt his children "should be aware of their own biases, because we all have them." Another wanted to give her children "an understanding of the implicit bias and social things that people absorb without thinking about it or realizing it, and just make them able to recognize those things."

Underpinning these socialization messages is the view that racism is about individual acts of prejudice and discrimination. The messages were not specifically about the societal systems of racial inequalities or the structural *advantages* that came with whiteness. Nor were there calls to take social action to address these racial inequalities.

At age 30, over a third of the White participants (36%) talked about the importance of raising their children in a racially diverse environment. They believed in the importance of having intergroup contact and feared the outcomes for their children from growing up in predominantly white environments where people are "completely

unaware of these broader issues.” They did not want their children to fall victim to the same *invisibility of whiteness* they had grown up with: “I think it’s really important not just to know about diversity and to know the importance of diversity and know how important racism is, but actually to have contact with [people of another race] and to grow up in a place where you can form close relationships with people of different backgrounds than you.”

Recognition of White Privilege

Another important aspect of white racial identity that emerged from the interviews was the *recognition of white privilege*. While *the invisibility of whiteness* pertains broadly to participants’ lack of awareness of their own race, *recognition of white privilege* refers specifically to the extent of their understanding of the advantages that accrued to them because of their race. An important part of the learning that took place at Amherst for White participants was about the privileges they held because they were White. Upon entry to college, at least a third of the White participants were unaware of any white privilege they carried. That percentage may have been greater, but other participants made no *explicit* comments to indicate a lack of awareness of their privilege. One who was explicit put it this way: “Say someone of a different race had parents with the same job and went to the same school. I don’t feel we’d have really that different opportunities.”

On the other hand, in their initial Amherst interviews 56% of the participants indicated some recognition of white privilege, although the depth of this awareness and understanding of the extent and nature of the privilege varied substantially. Inconsistencies in individual participants’ responses were also present. Almost half of the participants who had some recognition of white privilege also reported at another point in their interviews that being White had had little to no impact on their lives. A few participants recognized white privilege in terms of being given more opportunity: “I’ve had opportunities because of my race, and I’m very lucky to have had those opportunities”, “I’m aware of the advantages I get from it, sometimes, often I’m not, but I don’t think about it that often”, “I’ve probably been helped out a little bit because I’m White, but I don’t know.” While having some recognition of white privilege, it is clear in the latter two statements the privilege was barely understood, not fully owned, not thought about often, and of minimal significance. Unlike *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination*, however, these participants went beyond seeing racism as about the disadvantages people of color faced and had some awareness of the opposite side of the coin – the advantages they, as White people held.

At the start of college, a *recognition of white privilege* was highly salient for only 10% of the participants. It was accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame:

It's unquestionably true that there's a lot of racism in this country, and the fact is that a person of Caucasian race is simply going to be discriminated *for*. More opportunities and less prejudice will arise for a White person and that's incredibly unfortunate, it's terrible and I can't stand it, but it's a fact unfortunately. ... Being White just tragically confers advantage upon you.

Another participant noted that being White: "puts you in a position of privilege. And I think that for a lot of people when they realize they're in a position of privilege, they have feelings of guilt and shame, and that's documented – 'White guilt' and 'White shame.'"

At age 30, when asked to look back at their college experience in terms of their understanding of white privilege, 80% of the participants reported having gained some awareness of different aspects of white privilege. Exposure to people of color enabled some participants to recognize that a taken-for-granted advantage of whiteness was *not* having to think about race, a privilege that people of color did not possess. Some of their comments also exhibited the continuing presence of *the invisibility of whiteness*. One participant noted, "As a White person, it's still a privilege that I get to choose to think about [race]. I don't have to, it's not forced upon me in a way that it would be if I were not White." One person noticed that as a White person, he could "almost turn my thinking about it on and off, which I try not to turn it off because it worries me when I turn it off now. But it's something I can deal with or not deal with depending on how I feel." Another participant saw that part of her privilege as a White person was not having "to question or think about how others view me." Her comment is very much in accord with the description W. E. B. DuBois gave over a century ago of the double consciousness people of color live with, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others."¹⁸

The learning that occurred at Amherst about white privilege enabled participants to see it more clearly in their daily lives. A woman had returned to her home community where almost everyone was White:

It's an area where most people don't recognize that they have privileges based on their race at all, and often feel that the privilege goes the other way. It can be frustrating to see the way that people think about their race and privilege associated with race, which a lot of White people here view as going in the other direction and don't even think about.

White privilege played a more salient role in participants' thinking than it had when they were in college, no doubt influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement that began in 2013, and increased publicity about police brutality in the news. At age 30, 88% of participants had responses that indicated some recognition of white privilege, though

that awareness went in and out of consciousness. The percentage is higher than for other aspects of white racial identity, likely because participants were questioned directly about whether they learned something about white privilege while at Amherst. One noted:

the idea of [White] privilege has gone from being this thing that maybe we all subconsciously understood, the ways in which our different backgrounds inform our perspectives and our opportunities, to being really, really central to conversation and to being something that, every day, I'm trying to get better at checking my privilege.

Many showed an awareness of the various privileges White people hold – in the criminal justice system, in the medical care they receive, in the workplace, in housing and education.

A salient part of the messages some participants wanted to pass on to their children was a consciousness of their *white privilege*, a message that was often present along with the *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination*. One participant had married a person of color and knew her children would have to navigate being bi-racial: “I do want them to grow up conscious of the privileges that White people have, and that they might get because they look White, that their dad wouldn't get or their grandparents wouldn't get, assuming they look fairly White, which they probably will because even he is fairly light skinned.”

Visibility of Systemic Racism

At the start of college only three participants made comments demonstrating some understanding of the structural nature of racism. Each of these three came to Amherst having had intensive experiences with people of color that caused them to think deeply about whiteness and white privilege specifically. One of the three had attended a six-week seminar on race where participants lived together, and he was the only White person there. The experience deepened his understanding: “I certainly knew what racism was and thought it was a despicable thing. But I thought about it like a lot of people do. At that point in my life I thought about it like saying the N-word, not about the bigger systemic aspect.” That changed with his seminar experience. During high school another participant had done a lot of “introspection and formal work, working with other White people about what it means to be White, and then talking in mixed-race groups about race and what it means to be the race you are in this country.” He noted in his first interview: “You also have to look at how whiteness is institutionalized. I think about it in terms of this college; it's run by groups of White people. It's just something that I think

that as a White person, you have to think about. And a lot of White people don't think about it."

By the end of college, 21% of participants spoke of learning about systemic racism and that was attributable to taking courses pertaining to race and inequality. For one participant, a Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought course "opened my eyes on bias in the criminal justice system that I hadn't previously thought about an awful lot." Another participant became aware that "people benefit economically from the oppression of others. And it's something that once you put in the structure of your society, then it's just going to continue." A participant who was going into teaching thought a great deal about "how race is dealt with in education systems," about school curriculums and "what should be taught as a master American narrative."

When interviewed at age 30, the *visibility of systemic racism* had taken a much more prominent place in participants' worldviews, with 44% of participants commenting on thinking about racial inequalities at a systemic level on a regular basis. One participant now thought often about racism "on a macro level, and how we as a country have gotten here." She was concerned about color-blind racism, that "people can accuse people of something made up like reverse racism, which is really just a way of forgetting the structural and societal problems of the whole." Another participant thought more about "how race, gender, class, how those are all systems used to oppress people."

The most commonly discussed topic was police brutality and systemic racism in the justice system. They had become front and center in the news since the shootings of Trayvon Martin and many others, and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, which had helped to raise White people's awareness. Several White participants who were lawyers were already highly aware of racism in the criminal justice system. For example, a public defender had clients who were almost uniformly poor, Black, and in jail: "Racial differences and how our court system treats people of certain races is something we talk about at my office basically every day." She thought about the racial inequalities she observed in the bail bonds that people have to pay to get out of jail and the sentences people get.

A social worker reflected on the clients she worked with: "how their race affects where they live in the city, the resources they can access, how they are treated as victims of crime, how they interact with different systems, how my White clients often have a very different experience." Participants expressed concerns about racial inequalities in housing. Many had moved into gentrifying neighborhoods, where the reinvestment in and renewal of urban neighborhoods was displacing people of color and replacing them with middle- and upper-middle-class residents who are predominantly White. A participant had become highly disturbed by "the effect of gentrification on major urban centers."

Thirty percent of participants wanted to teach their children they were born into a society with racial oppression, a message usually accompanied with *recognition of white privilege*. One participant wanted to talk to them:

early on about race and racism, just acknowledge that racism exists and there is such a thing as systemic racism. Talk about all the structures that create oppression. And to a varying degree, maybe not using those words at age three, but just starting to address systemic racism. Being a social worker, I've been exposed to the range of oppressive structures in our society and how that affects different communities. So I hope that's something that I would have my children be aware of, and to be aware of their privilege in having two White parents.

Another White participant wanted to teach her children that "racism is a problem and there's systemic bias in society."

Commitment to Addressing Systemic Inequalities

The final aspect of participants' White racial identities that emerged in some interviews was a *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities*. This aspect became salient in the interviews at age 30 for 36% of the participants. A quarter of the participants worked to eradicate racial injustice through their choice of occupation and interactions at work. One participant who became a public defender shared these reflections:

Since college I've become more aware of my privilege because of my race, and I feel more obligated to try to do some kind of work that acknowledges that and try to do something about that. And part of the reason that I wanted to become a public defender is because of all the racial injustice in the criminal justice system. ... I felt an obligation to do something because I'm White and I get all this privilege that's unearned.

Another lawyer participant had worked on criminal cases where "an African American man presents evidence in mitigation of the crimes about his horrible upbringing and the neighborhood he grew up in and the rampant violence and economic inequality." She hoped eventually to "work in the government sector, hopefully with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) doing anti-discrimination and civil rights work."

One participant had gone into East Harlem in the Teach for America program after college: "I was informed by wanting to do racial justice work." He worked with children

who were non-White who “had different life experiences than me, that came from very different economic backgrounds from me. That’s what I wanted. I did it on purpose, both to inform my own racial identity and experiences, and also to do social justice work.” He went on to law school. “When I chose my 1L internship through the Ford Foundation, I wanted to continue that kind of work. And also, when I decided to do plaintiff side employment law last year, I could have gone to a big law firm, but I wanted to do work that continued to impact communities that were different than mine. And that was a good way to do that and get legal experience.”

A woman became a social worker worked in predominately low-income, Black communities. Leaving Amherst, she thought she wanted to go to law school, but discovered “that was not the path I would really feel fulfilled by.” Through volunteer work and internships, she discovered that “helping people and working directly with marginalized communities was what I found really compelling. And I had been a Black Studies major at Amherst College, so I had always been interested in vulnerable populations and working with those who are marginalized.”

At age 30, when it came to messages they would give their children, only two participants specifically said they would tell their children to involve themselves in trying to address systemic inequalities. One participant wanted to explain to his kids how, if people do not initiate change, white privilege will continue to be perpetuated: “If everyone does that, you just end up having the same sort of people get advantage over [people of color] so that’s something I want to be able to talk to my kids about.” The other participant would tell his children that they must act against racism whenever they encounter it.

Discussion

Six inter-related aspects of white racial identity emerged from an analysis of the interviews. Each could be high or low in salience for an individual at different points in time depending on exposure to new environments and life experiences.¹⁹ Here, then, is an overview as they pertained to White study participants *when they entered college*. For most participants, *the invisibility of whiteness* was a salient aspect of their White racial identities. Race held little importance to self-definition. The majority grew up in racially homogeneous communities, where being White was the norm and thus whiteness was unseen and thought to have made little difference to their lives. Present, too, was *color-blind racism*. Some of the White participants were explicitly socialized to try not to see race, and not let race affect their judgments of others. Some felt being White put them at a disadvantage because affirmative action policies were not color-blind and gave preferential treatment to Black people and thus were unfair and discriminatory to Whites. There was no acknowledgement of the inherent racial inequalities these programs were

set up to address. For many, there was little *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination*. Some participants were unsure that discrimination still existed. They didn't see it. They hadn't experienced it, and they weren't Black, so how could they have this awareness? Such sentiments are typical expressions of *color-blind racism*. *Recognition of white privilege* held little salience. With a few exceptions, *visibility of systemic racism* and *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities* were not in evidence, and racism where it appeared was understood to operate at the individual level.²⁰ Few participants had any awareness of the systemic policies and practices that disadvantaged Black people. These results are consistent with previous findings on color-blind racism and white privilege.²¹

After four years at a racially diverse college, changes occurred in many participants' White racial identities. Through relationships with classmates of color, some participants' *recognition of white privilege* became a more salient aspect of their White racial identities. They came to recognize they had been afforded more opportunities and advantages, one of which was the white privilege of not having to think about race. *Awareness of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination* likewise became more prominent for participants who formed relationships with students of color and heard about the impact that stereotypes, personal prejudice and discrimination had on their lives. Some participants came to see that they had internalized stereotypes and prejudice and that they possessed unconscious bias. Racial naïveté became less prominent, and racial awareness gained visibility mostly when people of color were directly part of their lives.²² These data strongly support the importance of intergroup contact,²³ but also point to a limitation of contact theory in addressing racial inequalities. Contact theory approaches racism at the individual level. The learning that occurred from intergroup contact enabled participants to see stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination as it occurred at an individual level. However, intergroup contact did not enable participants to understand the role systemic racism plays in creating racial injustice, or how the racial structure of society continued to benefit them. Such knowledge was acquired only by those participants who took courses dealing with the structures, policies and practices that perpetuate racism.

Participants were exposed to new contexts post-college, to new life experiences as well as to societal changes. By age 30 the *visibility of systemic racism* gained prominence in the White racial identities of almost half the participants, and over a third of the participants developed a *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities*. The increased salience of *awareness of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination* and *recognition of white privilege* impacted the messages participants would give their children about race. Many wanted their children to be aware of the internalization of racial stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against people of color, and of their white privilege. Yet despite a growing understanding of systemic racism, only two participants spoke of explicitly teaching their children to take responsibility for interrupting the racial system they were

born into that advantaged them in terms of housing, loans, voting rights, criminal justice, and education.

Despite the learning that occurred about racial inequalities, a contradiction remained in participants' thinking, as *the invisibility of whiteness* persisted over the 12 years of the study. Even when exposed to blatant examples of systemic injustice on the nightly news, some spoke of their awareness quickly fading from consciousness. While it was clear that some participants had made a *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities* through their work, little evidence existed for other participants' motivation to address systemic racism. They were not questioned specifically, however, about systemic racism, so we do not know whether other participants might be voicing support for anti-racist policies and practices in organizations they worked for. The study reveals the importance of understanding white racial identity because of its implications for the perpetuation of racial inequality. As long as *the invisibility of whiteness* remains salient, and the *visibility of systemic racism* can so quickly disappear from view, it is difficult for White people to develop a *commitment to addressing systemic inequalities*.

Historically, change in social structures that perpetuate racism has required social protest, but as sociologist Bonilla-Silva argues, "change begins when people see things differently."²⁴ Higher education has an extremely important role to play in helping people see things differently, as well as reducing racial inequality by creating opportunities for cross-race contact and by teaching students about how racism is embedded in our social order. Attendance at a racially diverse college gave participants the opportunity for cross-race interaction, which, for many, increased their understanding of the impact of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, of their own unconscious racial bias, and their white privilege. Intergroup contact was not sufficient, however, to create an understanding of systemic racism. Coursework was needed to learn how and why historically racial inequalities have been embedded by White people in our laws, institutions, policies and practices.

Educated citizens become the agents of socialization for the next generation. Research has found that White parents who raise children in predominantly White neighborhoods and whose children attend all-white schools tend not to see racism as a problem. These parents tend to have a color-blind approach, do not talk to their children about race, and do not believe race should influence who their children have the opportunity to develop relationships with. Their children do not see racism as a problem.²⁵ These parents lack the awareness and understanding necessary to help their children perceive the racist structure of our society or racism as it operates at the individual level. Lacking that awareness, their children have no reason to work to help dismantle the racist system that disadvantages people of color.

Because of their experiences as part of a racially diverse student body, over a third of the White participants in this study recognized the importance of raising their children in a racially diverse environment to combat the invisibility of whiteness, and the

importance of helping educate their children about racial injustice and white privilege. Sociologist Margaret Hagerman found that White parents who consciously chose interracial contexts for their homes and their children's schooling also talked to their children about racial injustice and white privilege, and pushed their children towards social action.²⁶ Their children, in turn, saw themselves in racialized terms, and recognized their racial privilege. Hagerman argued that "children with colour-conscious racial views possess the rhetorical tools and agency necessary to challenge and rework dominant racial ideology, demonstrating the participatory role that children play in social change and hopeful possibilities for future racial justice."²⁷

The Amherst faculty would do well to discuss whether it needs to do more to ensure that cross-race contact is taking place, and to ensure that students take some coursework on our racial history, on the racist system in place in our society, and on how White people perpetuate racism. If these are not part of the education we give our students, our students will be less likely to talk to their children about racial inequality and the need to actively work for social justice. They and their children will continue to perpetuate and thus unwittingly legitimize the status quo.

Notes

¹ Frankenburg (1993).

² Gaertner & Dovidio (1986).

³ See, for example, Banaji & Greenwald (1995); Baron & Banaji (2006); Gaertner & McLaughlin (1983); Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park (1997).

⁴ Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin (2007), p. 273.

⁵ Bonilla-Silva (2015); Savas, (2013).

⁶ Kendi (2019). See also Anderson (2016) for a history of the ways racism was deliberately embedded in the U.S. constitution, state constitutions, state laws, and perpetuated by many Supreme Court decisions.

⁷ Hartmann, Gerteis, & Croll (2009).

⁸ Delgado and Stefancic (2000).

⁹ Oluo (2018); Wildman & Davis (2000).

¹⁰ DiAngelo (2019); Frankenburg (1993).

¹¹ Fasching-Varner (2014).

¹² Fasching-Varner (2014) held that "both naïveté and color-blind approaches are forever present" (p. 161), though naïveté may become less salient.

¹³ Minority students have been found to view climates on campus as more hostile, racist and discriminatory than White students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Feagin, Vera, & Imani (1996) found that Black students at a predominantly White university faced stereotyping, hostility and discrimination.

¹⁴ For importance of race/ethnicity to self-definition: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.917$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.76$; for lower-

income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.71$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.00$. Black participants reported race/ethnicity to be significantly more important to their self-definition than did White participants, $F(3, 45) = 36.74$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.473$. The effect size was large. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(3, 45) = 0.43$, $p = 0.518$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(3, 45) = 0.40$, $p = 0.531$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$.

¹⁵ Bonilla-Silva (2015; 2018).

¹⁶ Bonilla-Silva (2018). See also Savas (2013).

¹⁷ Bonilla-Silva (2015), p. 1364.

¹⁸ Du Bois (1993), p. 9. The book was first published in 1903.

¹⁹ No evidence was present of overt racism or ideologies of White nationalism that give rise to racial violence. Additional aspects of white racial identity like this would likely be found in politically more conservative samples and settings.

²⁰ These data are consistent with findings by Bonilla-Silva (2018) and Hartmann, Gerteis, & Croll (2009).

²¹ Bonilla-Silva (2018); Fasching-Varner (2012); McIntosh (1989); Oluo (2018); Wildman and Davis (2000). The findings are consistent as well with the tenants of critical race theory (Savas, 2013; Wildman & Davis, 2000).

²² The result is consistent with Fasching-Varner's (2014) theorizing.

²³ Allport (1954); Pettigrew & Tropp (2006).

²⁴ Bonilla-Silva (2018), p. 242.

²⁵ Hagerman (2014); Hamm (2001).

²⁶ Hagerman (2014).

²⁷ Hagerman (2014), p. 2612.

4

Learning from Racial Diversity

Many students grow up in homogeneous communities, and college often provides their first opportunity to interact with individuals who differ from them in race, class or cultural background. Students encounter classmates who have had quite different life experiences and internalized different attitudes, beliefs or perspectives. According to cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget, exposure to people with views discrepant with one's own produces the experience of *disequilibrium* or dissonance, creating uncertainty.¹ Current beliefs and conceptions must be reconciled with new information. In the process of resolving the dissonance between one's own views and those of others, one develops the ability to take another person's perspective.² A diverse student body thus has the potential to enable students to learn "how to put themselves in other people's shoes,"³ and can help them move from their own embedded, provincial worldviews to consider those of others.⁴

Backed by great resources, Amherst College has worked very purposefully to create a diverse student body. According to Amherst's mission statement, the college brings students to campus from all backgrounds regardless of financial need: "in order to promote diversity of experience and ideas within a purposefully small residential community."⁵ The college holds to the belief expressed by Neil Rudenstine, former Harvard University president that: "No formal academic study can replace continued association with others who are different from ourselves, and who challenge our preconceptions, prejudices, and assumptions, even as we challenge theirs."⁶ But to what extent does such learning from racial and socioeconomic diversity actually occur?

Often we understand things differently as we grow older, having undergone more life experiences, lived in new contexts, learned more and developed new perspectives. Eight years after the participants in my study graduated, I sought to examine how, looking back at their Amherst experience, they viewed their learning about race and

racial inequality through the lens of time. What views did participants now hold about the learning they did as undergraduates? This chapter examines retrospective reports at age 30 of what participants learned at Amherst about race and racial inequality as well as the sources of the learning, be it coursework about race and interactions with professors, close friendships or daily interactions with classmates of another race, speakers, workshops or other sources.

At age 30, participants identified two main sources of their learning – interactions with classmates, and professors and coursework. The chapter begins with what participants learned about race from their interactions with classmates. Strikingly, overall 81% of participants, both Black and White, reported they had learned about race and racial inequality through peer interactions, but the content of that learning differed by race.⁷ In addition, significantly more lower-income than affluent participants reported learning from interactions with racially diverse peers (96% versus 67%).⁸ We turn first to Black participants' learning and then to the White participants' learning. Class differences will be examined along the way.

Black Participants

Reflecting back on their learning about race and racial inequality at Amherst, 83% of Black participants reported learning from their interactions with peers. An even higher percentage of lower-income than affluent Black participants described such learning (100% versus 67%). This may be due in part to affluent Black participants' learning prior to coming to Amherst. Over three-quarters (78%) of them had attended private boarding or day schools with predominantly White classmates versus 44% of the lower-income Black participants. Thus, they came to Amherst with more experience in a predominantly elite white community similar to the one they found at Amherst.⁹ The lower-income Black participants likely reported more learning than their affluent Black classmates because more was new to them. But both affluent and lower-income Black participants had additional learning to acquire, as neither group had been exposed to the heterogeneity of Black people whom they would meet on campus. And some had little or no contact with people from racial groups other than Black and White who would be at Amherst. The learning about race and racial inequality described by Black participants clearly came from a number of sources.

Learning from Classmates of Diverse Races

Only 9% of the students in the Class of 2009 had self-identified as "African American, Black." Another 7% self-identified as "multi-ethnic," some whom may have been part African American or Black.¹⁰ Given these numbers, Black students were pushed more than White students to reach beyond people of their own race in forming friendships. At the end of their first year, Black participants had reported one-third of

their close friends were same race, while White participants reported two thirds of their friends were the same race.¹¹ Forming cross-race friendships was beneficial to Black participants' learning. An affluent Black woman reported, "With my friends, hearing their experiences and maybe sometimes disagreeing on something due to our different perspectives, that was definitely a push for me to now really open my eyes and see things differently."

Most lower-income Black participants were exposed to a more racially diverse group of people than they had encountered in the past. Reflecting back on her learning while at Amherst, a lower-income Black woman noted how diverse her friend group was, including: "a friend from New Jersey who was Columbian, and friends from the rugby team that were Asian. And I had friends from just all different kinds of places and states and countries. And so I really felt like that influenced me a lot. Just hearing different perspectives on the world and life experiences." A lower-income Black woman had learned that: "People have a lot of different cultures. And I was exposed to that. Either you're going to be critical of everybody or you're going to be open to a lot. And I chose the latter; I was open to a lot. So, okay that's who they are. And then you just interact."

Engagement in co-curricular activities led some to interactions with a diverse set of classmates. For an affluent Black woman who had attended a predominantly White high school, Amherst provided "a wider range of experiences as far as dealing with people from different backgrounds and different races. That helped change me and see things from other people's perspectives and made me more open minded to a lot more things." She took part in Dancing and Stepping at Amherst College (DASAC) and Social Council:

It was just being in all these different social groups, some were more diverse than others. But I think seeing those differences and working with people with different backgrounds, that definitely prepared me and helped shape my view on how to act in future situations that were diverse and had people of different backgrounds included.

During her time at Amherst, another affluent Black woman worked as a resident counselor and took part in many conversations among a diverse group of students:

I just remember having great discussions about inclusion and culture and backgrounds and diversity and, yeah, I feel like that helped me understand how those things can impact a dorm community and personal relationships. And then also that group I felt was pretty diverse, so just getting close to people of different backgrounds and different cultures as a part of being a resident counselor. I feel like that experience was helpful.

A lower-income Black woman was part of a very racially diverse group of friends at Amherst:

The group that I was involved in was a very politically active, very racially conscious group. They were just the kind of people who wouldn't let you get away with any kind of shit. So, if you said something that was off, they'd call you out. ... And just being a part of that community really pushed me to examine any previously held biases.

Unlike the previous quotes, this woman touched on learning about herself through interactions with mixed-race peers, rather than learning about others.

The learning described by one affluent Black man involved coming to see the commonality that existed between members of all races including White people. He had joined one of the underground fraternities¹² that existed at Amherst at this point: "It was a very racially diverse fraternity, which is part of why I joined it, because I had found certain members were of all walks of life and all colors, which is awesome. And so that brought me closer to this belief that we're more similar. We are quite similar."

As seen in many of the quotes above, what Black participants recalled learning from diverse peers was about different perspectives, cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences they had not been exposed to previously, and in one case about underlying commonalities across race. What was remembered over time was a broadening of their understanding of race. While the quotes attest to their learning, many participants unfortunately did not provide specific examples of what they learned.

Learning from the Heterogeneity of Black Classmates

Another source of learning for many Black participants, both affluent and lower-income, derived from the heterogeneity of Black classmates they encountered. Amherst provided their first exposure to many dimensions along which Black people differ from one another, e.g., culture, social class, skin tone, racial identity. An affluent Black woman who was bi-racial – Black and White – learned about how skin tone and culture can divide Black people: "I remember feeling a little bit like I didn't have a group that I fit in racially." She was ambivalent about joining the Black Student Union (BSU) thinking, "maybe this is something I should be a part of. But then I was like, 'Oh I don't know. I culturally don't really feel like I fit in here. ... I had an awareness at Amherst that I didn't necessarily have growing up of how race can divide people.'" A lower-income Black man reported, "One group that I think perhaps had an impact on me was a significant West Indian community at Amherst. And I think this was important to me in my understanding of the African diaspora, and differences in Black groups, and appreciating a deeper Black culture."

A lower-income Black woman had been very involved with the BSU. She became chair and got to know people on the board:

The people who were involved were very involved and had very strong beliefs. So, I think that was my first real exposure to Black Nationalism. And it felt a little more extreme than I was used to, but it also exposed me to a lot more than I had been, so I think that was one of the things that helped push me a little more out left in my views of race relations. ... Being a part of the BSU was one of those events and groups of people who really helped open my eyes.

Learning from Relationships with White Classmates

For some Black participants, a great deal of learning came from interactions with White classmates. Through those interactions, Black participants gained a firmer grasp on the stereotypes and prejudices White people held about Black people, on how uninformed White people's views could be about Black cultures and communities, and of the privileges that accrued to White people because of their race.

An affluent Black man who grew up in a racially diverse city roomed sophomore year with a very close White friend who had grown up in a predominantly White southern community. The participant described his friend as "a wonderful person. And he very clearly had never had an actual honest to God real conversation with a Black person before he got to college." The participant was amazed a White person could grow up in Alabama and never interact with a Black person. "I was very surprised by how, 'sheltered' isn't the right word, but how very 'mono cultural' some people's upbringings were." A lower-income Black woman was struck by some White people's "lack of knowledge and understanding about what really occurred [for Black people] and just stereotypical ideas [White people held] about what happened in a Black community and why this was happening and why that was happening." In response she tried to "articulate to people that it's more complex than that. It's not what you see on BET [Black Entertainment Television] is what's happening, and what you see in the media is not what's happening."

A lower-income Black woman from a predominantly Black community felt her culture was not recognized as equal to that of White classmates:

Being a Southerner, Black woman, low socioeconomic status at Amherst, I felt pretty unprivileged in a lot of categories. And so any time that I was interacting with most people at Amherst, I was very cognizant of how I would be perceived, and which face I needed to show and whether I would fit in, and can I [be] articulate, how do I express what I'm trying to say? And so I think Amherst College in general was a good preparation for me that not everybody's culture is the same. And not everybody recognizes your culture as just that – your culture. So, it's not like people are looking at it

and saying apples and oranges, sometimes people are looking at it and saying high quality oranges, low quality oranges.

A lower-income Black woman observed the racially biased response some White students had to a given behavior depending on the race of the person involved.

So, it's a lot of your Black classmates missed the class. People would assume that, 'Oh they're lazy, they're just getting by.' And then there's a White classmate that's slacking, they'd be like, 'Oh I hope everything's okay, are they sick?' So it's small things like that that really adds up. But when you see it over and over and over again, you can't deny where that's coming from.

Relationships with White classmates increased Black participants' understanding of white privilege, of the advantages White people held and took for granted as they moved through their daily lives. An affluent Black man gained a new awareness of white privilege in going places with the volleyball and debate teams, which were composed primarily of White students. He noticed some White students were:

okay with bending the rules – it's illegal to smoke pot but I'm going to do it anyway. ... And after talking with them about different rules, they don't have any understandings of potential consequences. ... But it isn't like well, okay. If I were to smoke pot or whatever and get arrested for it that would be not good. That would be something that would be sufficient to ruin my life. ... There were some people who very clearly never thought through the consequences of their actions. All of these people that I met in college, they were all White, they were all from privileged backgrounds. So, I thought okay, there must be something about that background that puts you in that frame of mind.

A lower-income Black man found that at Amherst white privilege was:

pretty much all around you at every moment. I would say there's quite a few things I learned about white privilege. ... You see it all the time, whether it's in the dining hall, whether it's in the dorm, whether it's in a party, just the sense of there's a whole different comfort level. And then there's a whole different sense of entitlement as well. ... You learn white privilege comes in many different shapes and sizes. And sometimes it's not necessarily directed at essentially demeaning others who are not White, but it can still have that same effect.

There was an additional part to his learning. He realized,

If I want to advance and be a success, I better figure out how to really use [my time at Amherst] to my advantage as well, and not just look at it from a perspective of this [kind of privilege] is something that I'll never experience, but figure out okay, how can I maneuver in this world of white privilege, in order for it to be to my best benefit, without losing the site of myself.

As expressed in the previous quote and for other Black participants as well, an important part of their learning from their interactions with White classmates was about how to be successful in the world of white privilege, and how to negotiate being the only Black person in a predominantly white setting. A lower-income Black man said,

I can think of a lot of examples of experiences where my experience prepared me for the day-to-day job that I have where I'm one of very few, if not the only person of color in a certain situation. ... I think my experience at Amherst helped me understand the dynamics of being that person in the room a little bit further.

A lower-income Black woman likewise reported, "I think Amherst prepared me to be in a room where I'm the only Black person at all times – and just being comfortable or at least give the impression of comfort in those situations. And when people try to dismiss you or something and you're like 'No, I graduated from Amherst College. You're not going to dismiss me in this situation.'"

A lower-income Black woman from a predominantly Black community learned that she must be aware of prejudice and:

adjust yourself to be able to be seen the way that you want to be seen. And sometimes no matter what you do, people are still going to see you the way they want to see you. You just have to know when you can influence it and when you can't and let it go.

An affluent Black woman still had vivid memories of her experiences with racism and exclusion as the only Black player on her varsity team at Amherst. She reported that teammates were:

always like 'Why do you talk that way, why do you wear these clothes, why do you have your hair like this?', questioning my commitment to the team, questioning my individuality where from a social standpoint I like to do certain things and my team likes to do other things. And since I'm not doing the things that they're doing, then something's wrong with me. [I'm] trying to figure out why people are talking about me the same way they're talking

about Serena Williams on the TV, as being physically capable but intellectually lacking. That and just coming at me all the time. ... I think overall, it's just this thought that you think people are open, accepting and they're your friend you can trust them, but yet they still exhibit this racist behavior, this racist undertone in how they treat you or how they speak to you. I think it just opened my eyes to different types of people or how racism can be exhibited in different ways.

She developed ways to respond to these racial microaggressions:

I decided that I wasn't going to entertain what people thought about me, or go out of my way to try and get people to see me as who I am and the things that I like and explain myself. ... I grew to accept me for who I am and really take pride in who I am, and the things that I've done, and the things that I want to do, and not entertain people who question me as a person. And I think it took me three years to get to that point at Amherst. And I do live my life that way where I'm, 'This is who I am. I might care what you think but I probably don't.' ... I attribute to that growth coming from my time at Amherst.

Crucial to her development, she was encouraged by a professor to speak with her coach, which began the process of feeling: "I'm a good person. I shouldn't be treated this way. It changed how I thought about myself and how I was going to handle people who I didn't feel treated me properly." At age 30, she strongly identified as an African American female with an investment in "trying to pave the way for other African Americans, other females, other minorities in general. So it shapes who I am as a person in a lot of what I do."

White Participants

When asked at age 30 to reflect on their learning about race and racial inequality at Amherst, and the sources of that learning, the first thing mentioned by 70% of the lower-income White participants and one affluent White participant was having grown up in predominantly white communities. They noted that Amherst provided the first opportunity to get to know people of different races. Eighty-eight percent of the original sample of lower-income White participants had attended public schools. While most affluent White participants also grew up in predominantly white communities, only 34% had gone to local public schools. Their private schools had recruited a more diverse student body. Lower-income White participants likely learned more than affluent White participants from the racial diversity because much more was new to them.

As was touched on in the previous chapter, lacking racial diversity in their schools and home communities, race was invisible for most lower-income White participants.

How jarring Amherst could be was exemplified by the lower-income White woman who grew up in a white world where Black people were referred to by the N-word. She had never spoken to a Black person prior to entering Amherst. Looking back at age 30, she still remembered vividly the first time she sat down in Valentine dining hall and a Black student took the seat across from her: "I was so afraid that I was going to say something racist that I just got up and left." But over her time at Amherst she "became close with people for pretty much the first time from different races."

Learning from Cross-race Friendships

Becoming close with people from different races opened participants up to a great deal of learning – about the life experiences of their friends and their friends' families with race and racism, and about the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination they had faced. Eighty percent of White participants attributed their learning about race and racial inequality to interactions with peers. A lower-income White woman had two Latina friends in her friend group: "They would tell us these stories of growing up where there would be very specific and even vulgar displays of racism. ... That was memorable to me, to hear about these experiences from these people who were very close to me." One of the best friends of a lower-income White woman was mixed race, African American and White: "Learning about and meeting her family and hearing about her experiences really changed my perspective on race." A lower-income White woman came to understand the negative impact that stereotypes have on Black people through her relationship at Amherst with an African American classmate who was 6'5" tall:

Just watching how people react to him sometimes, as though he's a threat – just seeing that in action, and then imagining what it would be like to have people immediately put you in a box that not only isn't fair and doesn't fit you, but is really offensive and just a hurtful way of having people see you.

Other White participants described how interactions with close friends of color gave them a new perspective on their own privilege. An affluent White man saw more poignantly the contrast between his background and that of two non-White, lower-income friends when he spent a few days in New York visiting them in poorer sections of the Bronx and Brooklyn. The visits were to:

communities that are unlike the community I grew up in, and with people's families who were not like mine. And those experiences stand out. ... I think probably the day to day [at Amherst], just socially spending time with people was more impactful. But the fact that I do remember those moments as, man, this is a very different world than the world I'm from.

Two White men (one lower-income and one affluent) had formed friendships with Black classmates through joining an underground fraternity whose membership was over 50% Black. The lower-income participant said membership in that fraternity was “one of the best experiences I ever had.” He joined because of the diversity of the members: “There were some amazing people I met who were very different than me. ... Getting to spend time with people like that and form close relationships with them was pretty powerful.” The affluent participant described how fraternity members would talk about “‘what happened to me this week that really pissed me off.’ And a lot of the times it would be about ‘I got pulled over by a police officer and wasn't doing anything wrong, and I got pulled over because I'm Black, right.’ You hear enough of those stories and you start to really open your eyes.”

One participant, an affluent White woman, reported learning about her own racial identity through her relationship with a Black female classmate, a relationship that continued to the present: “Of course, I learned about her own family and culture and the racism that she's experienced and all sorts of things. But it was also eye opening for me to just understand how deep some of these differences are lodged in whiteness, in the culture that this country has set up.” She gained a lens on her own race “in a way that I also hadn't, how to look at my own culture in a way that I wasn't taught to. And I think that White people in general are taught not to be observational in terms of their own race, while people of color have to be.”

Learning from Mixed Race Conversations with Classmates

Learning that derived from classmates came not just from close friendships but also from daily mixed-race conversations that took place on campus. A lower-income White man who had played varsity football said his learning came from conversations with classmates “in the dorms at 2:00 in the morning, on the football field, but not in the classroom at all.” A lower-income White woman noted:

There are just hundreds of small conversations with people where I had no idea how they felt about daily incidents of racism, or just even their own views. I think that was the special thing about my time at Amherst anyway, not only was I learning from other people, but they were learning about themselves. And being a part of somebody's thinking out loud, I think that was the most informative.

Conversations White participants had with Black classmates they knew from co-curricular groups contributed to their learning. An affluent White man who played varsity baseball still recalled vividly a very long conversation with one of the two or three Black players on the team about:

why college baseball was so white. I remember feeling really surprised and sort of taken aback by how out of place he felt on this team surrounded by White guys. And I wouldn't call it any kind of watershed moment of my understanding of race, but I think it was really one of the first times when I realized, when I had some inkling of how isolating and lonely and what a unicorn you can feel like when you're a minority in a really white setting. I remember that was a conversation that I think about a lot.

For some participants, conversations with racially diverse classmates made visible and more obvious the privileges that accrued to them because they were White. A lower-income White man said, "I don't want to say you feel ashamed of it, but you realize that you do have a lot of opportunities afforded you that are not necessarily afforded to non-White individuals." Similarly, a lower-income White woman said, "I recognize that I probably have had it easier than some people. I don't think it necessarily takes away from what I've accomplished, but I do recognize that I may have benefited from that."

Carryover into Current Lives

At age 30, many White participants were now embedded in a multi-racial world. On the on-line survey, 60% reported working with people of other races or cultures, and 48% spoke of living in mixed-race neighborhoods. Eighty-nine percent reported they had gotten to know well two or more Asian, Latinx, Native American, or mixed-race people since graduating from Amherst, and 63% had gotten to know well two or more Black people since graduating from Amherst. Ninety-two percent reported feeling either "comfortable" or "very comfortable" interacting with people of another race or ethnicity.

Having friends, co-workers and clients in their current lives who were racial minorities intensified some participants' concerns about racial inequalities. A lower-income White woman noted that: "Now you can't turn on the TV without seeing a Black person shot by police. And so I think about [racial inequality] more. ... Now I think about my friends who are Black being out there. And I hate that. And I hate it for their families." An affluent White woman lawyer said:

I have more friends, more diverse friends, and they've talked to me more about their own experiences and how race and racism have affected them in their life that's made me more conscious of it. And of course, my job. I mean I just have clients tell me about experience of racism all day long, and I see them being treated differently because of their race. So I just think about it all the time in a way that I didn't when I graduated from college.

A lower-income White man who became a doctor felt he gained a great deal from "having so many other guys on the [football] team that I worked with, or that I played with that were Black. In my life now, seeing someone who is African American in the

emergency department or taking care of them, I feel more able to interact with them and talk with them.” He was disturbed that:

It's usually minorities who don't have insurance or are under insured. And their lives get impacted more by whatever their muscular skeletal injuries are. They're not able to work. They're not able to use their hands. They're not able to be at labor or whatever. That can ruin their lives. They often times doesn't have either the support system or the savings or whatever it is, to be able to navigate and deal with whatever sort of trauma that happens to them.

Learning from Professors and Coursework on Race

For both Black and White participants, when reflecting on their learning at age 30, the second important source of learning about race and racism was professors and coursework on race. While they were students at Amherst, many more Black than White participants had taken courses that addressed Black people or Africa and had majored in Black Studies.¹³ Despite the fact that Black participants had completed more coursework on race during college than White participants, looking back on their learning at Amherst, 55% of participants identified professors and coursework on race as a source of their learning about race and racial inequalities. Percentages were similar by race.¹⁴ Participants cited courses in Black Studies; Sociology; Anthropology; Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought (LJST); Economics; film and literature as the sources of their learning. As was the case for reported learning about race through interactions with classmates, more lower-income than affluent participants reported learning from coursework on race and the professors who taught those courses (64% versus 46%). It is also interesting to note that what was often remembered with the passage of time was learning that came from classroom *discussions* and the diverse perspectives students of different races brought to those discussions.

The classroom was an important source of learning about systemic racism, i.e., about the way racism is embedded in our legal and social structure, in racist policies and practices that have a differential, discriminatory, and harmful effect on racial minorities. A lower-income Black woman was a Black Studies major. Her coursework introduced her to:

a lot of thinking about the history of structural racism and oppression in the United States and internationally. And so that all very much influenced the way I think about the world. ... It's all of the stuff that I learned and thought about and picked apart and was critical about in school through my classes and with my professors and fellow students. I think about that a lot today.

And it has definitely influenced the way I think about work and my social groups.

A lower-income White woman remembered another White student in a class talking about:

how she just didn't understand racism. ... And this kid that I knew who was Black was sitting next to her and he just turned to her and explained it in a very academic way, which is that people benefit economically from the oppression of others. And it's something that once you put into the structure of your society, then it's just going to continue. ... And so that changed my view of how we talk about these issues.

The knowledge gained in the classroom enabled Black participants to conceptualize and talk about “the things that you've known for so long and you see somebody write books about it and you're actually having discussions about it.” (affluent Black woman). While some White participants learned about how racism operates at the individual level through their relationships with racially diverse classmates, those relationships were not a source of learning about systemic racism. Learning about systemic racism came from courses that exposed participants to “the statistics behind some of the advantages that a White person would have over a non-White person” (affluent White woman).

In their interviews, other participants spoke about the importance of learning from the differing perspectives of classmates in classroom discussions. A lower-income Black man noted, “the fact that many of my Black Studies classes were relatively racially and ethnically diverse was helpful in thinking or talking about race with a diverse group of people.” A lower-income White woman had little exposure to or knowledge of the Latina community and immigration. She still recalled one class discussion talking about immigration:

Some student said something about illegals breaking the law. And there was a student in the class who had undocumented family members who broke down and yelled. ... Just seeing the emotional impact brought it home, and again, made it harder for me to accept people saying things like the student who talked about people breaking the law by crossing the border to be with their family.

Knowledge gained in the classroom was deepened and reinforced for participants by what they could observe outside the classroom. A lower-income White woman from a predominantly white community learned about white privilege in her coursework, but then could see this on campus: “I learned about it fairly academically, so recognizing it and seeing it's a thing that [White] people have, and [White] people don't have to think

about race in their interactions in general. Being part of the majority community makes a lot of things just smoother I guess and in an a very unconscious way.”

Importance of Diversity in Higher Education

Participants were asked in the on-line survey the extent of their agreement with three statements about the role of diversity in higher education. Each statement was rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree.” Responses did not differ by race or class on any of the three statements. Participants “strongly agreed” that “A diverse student body is essential to teaching skills to succeed and lead in the work environment.” The overall mean was 6.73.¹⁵ Participants “agreed” that “Enhancing a student’s ability to live in a multicultural society is part of a university’s mission.” The overall mean score for the participants were 6.33.¹⁶ Participants showed slightly less agreement with the third statement: “Colleges and universities should have a requirement for graduation that students take at least one course covering the role of race in society.” The overall mean for participants was 5.69.¹⁷

Discussion

The data speak strongly to the benefits of building a racially diverse community of students in terms of the learning outcomes it produces. Looking back on experiences at Amherst that had occurred 8-12 years previously, overall 81% of participants, both Black and White, clearly recollected learning from their interactions with peers of different races – hearing about experiences and perspectives that were so different from their own. While it is regrettable that specific examples were not always recalled, what participants took away from their Amherst experience was a deeper and wider understanding of race. Their preconceptions and worldviews were challenged and altered. But what participants learned differed for Black and White participants.

Though Black participants had, on the whole, considerably more exposure to White people before college than White participants had to Black people, at Amherst they learned a great deal from White classmates and those of other races, interactions that both broadened and deepened their understanding of race. Regarding White people, they got a close-up look at white privilege, examples of which were all around them. They gained a window into the ignorance some White students had about Black people, their cultures and communities. They learned, too, about some White students’ pejorative views of and racially biased responses to them and other Black people. This aspect of their learning is of great concern for it speaks to the presence of racism on campus and its impact on Black participants’ experience. Importantly they learned ways to respond to racism, how to maneuver in the world of white privilege, and how to negotiate being the only Black person in a predominantly white setting. This topic will be examined further in Chapter

9, which addresses the role of race in the workplace. Some Black participants' understanding of race extended to learning about their own race as they encountered the heterogeneity among Black people based on class, cultural background, skin tone, and racial identity.

Many White participants had no prior experience interacting with people of different races. Through the relationships formed with non-White classmates, these White participants learned about the very different realities students of color lived with – about the powerful effect stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination had on their lives and that of their families, and about the privileges that accrued to themselves as White people living in a society where being White confers power and privilege.

Just over half the participants reported that professors and courses were an important source of learning about race. It is striking that years later, a lasting take-away for some participants from those courses was the discussions that occurred in the classroom among a racially diverse group of students who brought very different perspectives to the course material. The readings were also crucial to their learning about *systemic* racism, something they did not learn about through interactions with classmates.

The results of this study are consistent with the positive outcomes of a racially diverse student body found in large scale survey studies. Researchers have reported that students who had positive informal interaction with racially diverse peers showed increased perspective-taking skills.¹⁸ According to a meta-analysis, taking diversity courses, attending diversity workshops, and interacting with diverse peers was found to be positively related to cognitive growth, but the strongest effects were for the association between *interaction with diverse peers* and cognitive growth.¹⁹ In another study, alumni were interviewed thirteen years after entry to college to determine how diversity experiences during college had affected them post-college. Participants who were more involved in diversity as undergraduates were much more likely to indicate that working effectively and getting along well with people of other races and cultures was important in their lives.²⁰ According to another large-scale meta-analysis, intergroup contact has long been found to reduce prejudice.²¹

Having a racially diverse student body, however, does not ensure that learning about race and racial inequality will occur. Most White participants did not take coursework on race, and thus did not learn about *systemic racism*, about how racism is embedded in our laws and institutional practices that continue to favor White people. Most did not learn about our country's history with race and racism. Nor did having racial diversity ensure that White students would learn about their own unconscious racial bias. Yet participants were now embedded in a multi-racial world. The majority reported working with people of other races or cultures. The participants agreed that part of a university's mission is to enhance students' ability to live in a multicultural society, and strongly agreed that a diverse student body is essential to imparting skills useful for

success and leadership in the workplace. With this in mind, it would be important for the faculty to think through how to better equip our students with knowledge and understanding of racial inequality, its history and current manifestations. We need to consider how to best educate students to overcome internalized prejudices, develop empathy and motivation to bridge differences with those whose societal experiences are so different from their own, and foster a desire to redress inequality.

Notes

¹ Piaget (1975/1985); Ruble, Eisenberg, & Tory Higgins (1994).

² Hurtado (2003, 2005).

³ Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin (2005), p. 4.

⁴ Hurtado (2007).

⁵ For the Amherst College mission statement, see <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/facts/mission> (accessed April 6, 2020).

⁶ Rudenstine (2001), p. 45.

⁷ Ninety-two percent of lower income White ($N = 13$), 100% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 67% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 67% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) attributed their learning about race and racial inequality at the college to interactions with peers. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

⁸ A χ^2 test with Yates for continuity was calculated: $\chi^2(1, N = 43) = 4.13, p = .042$, Cramer's $V = .37$.

⁹ Aries (2008).

¹⁰ Aries (2008).

¹¹ Aries (2008).

¹² In 1984 on-campus fraternities were banned, but four fraternities went "underground" and continued to function off campus.

¹³ Seventy-four percent of Black and 48% of White participants as seniors reported having taken a course specifically about Black people or Africa (Aries, 2013).

¹⁴ Looking back on their college experience, 62% of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 67% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 50% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 44% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported learning from coursework on race and professors. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁵ For agreement with the statement: "A diverse student body is essential to teaching skills to succeed and lead in the work environment": for lower-income White participants $N = 14, M = 6.64, SD = .63$; for affluent White participants $N = 13, M = 6.69, SD = .63$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9, M = 6.89, SD = .33$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9, M = 6.78, SD = .67$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .03, p = .865, \eta_p^2 = .001$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .84, p = .364, \eta_p^2 = .02$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .20, p = .659, \eta_p^2 = .005$.

¹⁶ For agreement with the statement: "Enhancing a student's ability to live in a multicultural society is part of a university's mission": for lower-income White participants $N = 14, M = 6.14,$

$SD = .77$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 6.46$, $SD = 1.13$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.13$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 6.33$, $SD = .96$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .13$, $p = .722$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .09$, $p = .766$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .55$, $p = .463$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$.

¹⁷ For agreement with the statement: "Colleges and universities should have a requirement for graduation that students take at least one course covering the role of race in society": for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 5.57$, $SD = .76$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.85$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.39$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 5.44$, $SD = 2.35$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .55$, $p = .462$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .24$, $p = .63$, $\eta_p^2 = .006$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .69$, $p = .411$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

¹⁸ Hurtado (2003, 2005).

¹⁹ Bowman (2011) meta-analysis.

²⁰ Wade-Golden, Matlock, & Gurin (2008/2015).

²¹ Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) meta-analysis.

5

Learning from Class Diversity

Arguments for increasing the socioeconomic diversity of the students at Amherst go beyond principles about promoting social mobility, equity, and social justice. They are based as well on the important learning outcomes that may occur for all students from being part of a socioeconomically diverse community. Similar to the case that has been made for the importance of racial diversity, the argument for how socioeconomic diversity impacts student learning draws on Piaget's cognitive theory.¹ By bringing students from very different class backgrounds together on a small, residential campus, they have many opportunities to interact with each other. Thus experiences occur where the discrepancies between their views and those of their peers produce *disequilibrium* or dissonance, creating uncertainty and promoting cognitive growth.² Those interactions motivate students to understand people and perspectives different from their own,³ and enable them to move from their own entrenched viewpoints to consider those of another.⁴ Empirical research demonstrates that if students encounter classmates from a wide variety of backgrounds, the college learning environment is improved for all students inside and outside the classroom.⁵ Students at a college with great disparities in wealth think and reflect more about social class and class identity than those at a college whose students come from similar social class backgrounds.⁶

In 2009, after four years at Amherst, both affluent and lower-income participants reported that fully half of their friends came from different class backgrounds than themselves, and 59% reported having dated someone not from their class. Clearly cross-class contact had taken place. Participants had also been asked at that time whether their experience being part of a socioeconomically diverse student body had changed the way they viewed people of their own social class or other social classes. Fifty-six percent said yes.⁷ As with learning from racially diverse peers, a socioeconomically diverse student body promoted learning though it did not ensure such learning would take place for all students.

When participants were age 30, I asked them, with the benefit of hindsight, to look back at their experiences at Amherst to see what they remembered learning about social class and whether their views of what they learned had changed with the passage of time. This chapter examines the retrospective reports they gave as to what they learned about social class at Amherst and the sources of that learning, be it from professors and coursework, classmates of another social class, speakers, workshops or other sources.

At age 30, participants identified one major source of learning about social class – classmates. Such learning was reported by 79% of the participants.⁸ No race or class differences were found. Only 14% of participants attributed their learning to professors or courses they took. First, I will take up the recollections of what lower-income participants learned, followed by an examination of what the affluent participants learned.

Lower-income Participants

In looking back at age 30, many lower-income participants noted their exposure to their affluent classmates not only taught them about the world wealthier people inhabited and the privileges they possessed, but also gave them an understanding of what would be required of them to fit into that world. Many lower-income participants remembered becoming quickly aware of markers of affluence that surrounded them. A lower-income White man stated, “Affluence you can see. You can see somebody drive a Bentley or drive a Mercedes or pay for everyone's drinks. Those are things you can see daily.” Another lower-income White man saw affluent classmates “during the summer being able to go do an internship that was unpaid, or go travel and live abroad, volunteering, not working through school, being able to go places and experience different cultures or take extracurricular classes on the side during breaks.” In a similar vein, a lower-income Black man noted, “You’ve got a classmate that’s going on a trip to the Hamptons for the summer and you’ve got classmates that are going to work a 9:00 to 5:00 job at a car wash or something. You learn that there are different [privileges] – being affluent gives you privilege, just like being White gives you privilege.”

Some encounters with very wealthy classmates were quite striking and remained vivid memories over the years. Shortly after he got to Amherst, a lower-income White man joined a pre-business group:

I certainly never met people like this before. The guy who was a junior, his grandfather was called the Warren Buffet of Canada, and worth many billions of dollars. So, eight weeks into being [at Amherst], he's like ‘Hey, we're going up to my family's house in Montreal.’ I'm like, ‘Cool, how are we going to get there? Should I buy a bus ticket or something?’ And he's

like, 'Oh no, it's fine, someone's going to come.' And it was their security guard.

They picked up a wealthy alum along the way at his "expensive condo. ... It was unlike anything I had ever experienced. So yeah, you learn about [great wealth] pretty quickly."

Most of the learning came from interactions that took place on campus. A lower-income Black woman said she learned about some of the privileges possessed by affluent students through "just general living" at college. She became aware of students who were legacies, a term she had been unfamiliar with. She had heard rumors about legacies breaking rules – legacies "who can do something and be given a second and a third chance. And then you have another friend, on the other hand, who gets in trouble for the same exact thing and then they get kicked out of the school or be put on a semester break. And it's like, 'Huh, how is that fair?'"

Unlike their affluent classmates, many lower-income participants could not afford to use the summer months to work unpaid internships, nor did they understand the importance of gaining pre-professional skills and experiences that would help build their resumes. A lower-income Black woman remembered learning about the value of getting an internship because classmates would "come back to talk about it." When it came to attaining summer positions, a lower-income White man got a sense of his lack of interview savvy compared to his affluent counterparts: "just by seeing who was well prepared for interviews, who got interviews, who got second round interviews." Some lower-income participants came to see that they did not have the connections to pre-professional summer jobs and internships that some of their affluent classmates had through their parents and parents' networks. A lower-income White woman was exposed to the "network of people that come with being affluent that I vaguely realized before I came to Amherst. ... Seeing it in action made it something in a way that I hadn't previously [realized]." A lower-income White man learned through affluent classmates: "It's not what you know, it's who you know."

Acquisition of Cultural Capital

A central part of lower-income participants' learning involved the acquisition of new forms of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to such things as cultural goods (e.g., books); linguistic competency; knowledge of highbrow aesthetic culture (e.g., ballet, opera); tastes and preferences; levels of confidence and entitlement; and skills and abilities that provide access to scarce rewards.⁹ Cultural capital is acquired primarily from one's family. Students enter college with distinctive cultural capital depending on their class backgrounds.¹⁰ At an elite college such as Amherst, it is the cultural capital of affluent students that is prized. In aggregate, they enter college with greater linguistic skills, knowledge of how to work the system to their advantage, and possess greater self-confidence and a sense of entitlement. But through exposure to upper middle-class and

wealthy classmates and to an environment rich in resources and opportunities, lower-income students acquire new more elite forms of cultural capital.

Looking back at age 30, 73% of lower-income participants noted having acquired at Amherst new forms cultural capital that helped facilitate their upward social mobility, while none of the affluent participants indicated such learning.¹¹ They had no need. The most important form of learning that lower-income participants acquired through their interactions with more affluent peers concerned ways to fit into and function in a world of people of a higher social class, learning that proved useful during their time at Amherst and beyond. A lower-income White woman reported,

I learned how to become friends with people who were really different than me. I also think I was introduced to people who came from more privileged backgrounds for the first time. I learned how to function in that world a little bit. And I also learned how to maybe get in that world too in ways that I didn't know before.

In the words of a lower-income Black woman:

I would say I also became more bi-cultural in college. I learned how to exist in two different realms. I learned how to exist with higher socioeconomic people. I learned the rules of the game. I see it like a game. If you want to escape poverty and become middle class, there's certain rules, there's certain codes for that culture that you have to learn. And I think I learned those things when I was at Amherst.

A lower-income White man similarly learned, "how to hang out with wealthier people. I learned how to hang out with smarter people. I could carry on conversations with more people because I had read a lot more books." A number of lower-income participants recounted taking a half-day course the college offered over the winter break about "dinner etiquette" and "how to eat politely at a meal." They learned such things as "what a salad fork was." This learning was all part of their newly acquired cultural capital and was highly useful for their success moving into a more affluent world in their lives after college. A lower-income Black woman who completed medical school said, "When you're in medical school and you're at these faculty dinners or student dinners, having gone to a place like Amherst where you've been in a situation with people from a similar cut of society allows you to fit in more." A lower-income White woman said that attending Amherst: "made things easier in law school and to a lesser extent where I've ended up after law school in fitting in with people [of a higher social class] and even having interviews – just being able to make connections about things like travel or

different kinds of food, just other cultural things that I didn't have any previous familiarity with."

Learning New Styles of Speech and Dress, Tastes and Preferences

In their interviews at age 30, lower-income participants described the acquisition of new forms of speech and dress during college. A lower-income Black man reported learning a different "communication style or just the way I talk. I had to assimilate into Amherst, and now I feel more comfortable. I continue to feel comfortable speaking and communicating in this way." He felt he had gained "more tools to assimilate in professional circles in America. ... I learned how to code switch and communicate in different ways with different groups at Amherst." Similarly, a lower-income Black woman who worked in program management learned "how to talk to people in a little bit more intellectual way," which proved helpful in being able to "navigate the job search process and networking abilities. I think that all has led to definitely my past few jobs and especially the one I have now." A lower-income Black woman from the South spoke with a Southern accent upon arrival at Amherst and feared being judged by the stereotype that people with a Southern accent are uneducated and ignorant. She made a "deliberate choice" to lose her accent and learn to speak differently: "I wanted to fit in and I changed who I was to fit in. I wanted to be respected in terms of what I was saying, instead of how I was saying it. But then once I overcame that, things were easier."

Some participants spoke of deliberate changes in clothing choice to better fit the norm. A lower-income White man reported, "I didn't have any collared shirts before I got there. And they were all collared shirts by the time I left. Yeah, I definitely assimilated to the culture of Amherst." Another lower-income White man said, "You start dressing in J. Crew and that's what you are supposed to do. I liked it. I felt comfortable with that identity and I still do in a lot of ways." A lower-income White woman who grew up in the South explained that: "I didn't show up at Amherst with Ugg boots and a Northface fleece, but I ended up with them at the end of four years. I didn't even know what Northface was. So, I definitely learned that." When a lower-income White woman from a farming community got to Amherst: "I was actually wearing boy clothes for the most part because I had farm stuff. And I had a friend who showed me how to use a curling iron. In a lot of ways, I learned how to be a grown up and do just normal things like dress yourself."

The culture of eating out at restaurants was uncommon among the families of lower-income participants. In her interview at age 30, a lower-income White woman from a rural community reported:

We hadn't eaten that much in restaurants growing up. We didn't really have them in my home town. Once a year when we went to the big city we would

eat at Red Lobster, and that was our thing – so just the culture of eating out and instead of just sitting around and drinking, which is what you do in small town America. You actually go someplace.

By the end of college, she had learned to eat “sushi and all these kinds of Thai, and stuff like that that I'd never had before. And now, [these things] are just commonplace in my life. ... Everything that I enjoy now, I was exposed to [during college].”

Learning the Rules of the Game

Lower-income participants gained a grasp of what was needed to succeed at Amherst and in the affluent world they would enter – going to office hours, asking professors for help, advocating for a grade, writing a resume, knowing how to interact with affluent people in job interviews and on the job. A lower-income White man talked about his exposure to people who went to a boarding school: “They would know to go to office hours, or to be able to argue a grade, just because that's something that they had done before. So, seeing this in action made it something in a way that I hadn't previously [realized].” Much of that learning came from their affluent classmates. A lower-income White man attributed his new skills to his classmates, to “being around people who are models of being smart and this is how you study.” Lower-income participants reported learning from affluent classmates how to succeed academically and in job searches. A lower-income Black man offered these examples: “When you are preparing for a job interview and you ask your friend, ‘What should I do to prepare?’ and they give you good advice and they say, ‘Do this.’ Or when you're applying for a job and they say, ‘Here's my resume, look at it and build yours off of that.’” Faced with personal issues, he would seek out peers and staff about “how they would handle a situation and get advice from those people. That's how I think I was changed.”

Affluent Participants

For the affluent participants, relationships with lower-income students provided a window into their lives, enabling affluent participants to see the extent to which lower-income classmates' experiences growing up differed from their own. This helped them gain a perspective and understanding of their own privileged position in society, something most had taken for granted to that point. Looking back at his experience being part of a socioeconomically diverse class at Amherst, an affluent Black man reported he had become “more aware of opportunities and the fact that everyone doesn't have the same opportunities.” For an affluent White woman having lower-income friends and dating someone while she was at Amherst who was lower-income helped her recognize her own affluence:

It makes me cringe when I think about what my interview must have been like when I was a freshman at Amherst for this study. I imagine that I was probably, 'Oh well, we're not that rich,' because that's how I felt. I didn't feel that we were very rich. And I didn't understand the gradations of it since I had gone to a school in which everyone is richer than I am. It took me a couple years to really recognize the full extent of the socioeconomic privilege that my family had had.

Another affluent White woman remembered seeing the contrast between privileges she had grown up with and what her lower-income classmates experienced: "things like college counseling and test prep and things like that that I feel were a given for me and the classmates I had in high school – whereas it didn't seem to be the case with everyone at Amherst, particularly people from different class backgrounds and different races." Similarly, an affluent White man had learned about his own privilege through "classmates who couldn't go home for the holidays – they couldn't afford the plane ticket, classmates who couldn't take part in certain activities because they couldn't afford the ticket or the meal or whatever." An affluent Black man reflected, "I come from a more comfortable background than most of my good friends from college, and so things like going to visit my family for Christmas, things like having my parents help out with tuition and textbooks and all of that. It's very stark and very obvious and [you] start noticing it very quickly." An affluent White woman had learned about her own privilege from "my peers and just talking about our different experiences growing up, being able to afford college, being able to afford Amherst." She became aware that lower-income friends had to "really rely on work-study jobs, whereas I did mine more to just have pocket money and it wasn't as necessary to getting through week by week."

Some affluent participants learned about a world of privilege they had been unaware of from classmates whose families had much greater wealth. An affluent White woman noted, "I grew up upper middle class, but certainly not 1%." At Amherst she met classmates from families who were in the top 1%, and came to see the privileges that they had, something "I wasn't fully aware of before going to college." An affluent White man learned from students both above and below him on the class spectrum: "I both saw people who came from very privileged backgrounds that I hadn't seen as much in my home community, and also became closer friends with people from less privileged backgrounds. ... I think I was exposed to some of the more extremes coming together."

For some affluent participants, particular moments that made their privilege visible remained strongly poignant with the passage of time. An affluent White man spoke of a visit to New York City with his closest friend who was low-income. His friend was "actually very close to my parents. He spent a lot of time at my house with my family." They stopped at his friend's family's apartment so his friend could grab something.

I was like, 'Well, I'll come up with you.' He's like, 'Naw, that's not going to happen.' And what became clear was that he just felt uncomfortable with the place he'd been raised, and the situation that his family was in, or the physical setting that he'd grown up [in]. And I remember that made me pretty conscious of my good fortune.

Messages for Their Children About Social Class

Participants were asked at age 30 if they had messages they wanted to give their children about social class. Several themes were present in those messages that show the influence of the experiences they had at Amherst and the learning they had done about social class. Many affluent participants wanted their children to understand class inequalities and how greatly privileged they were. They wanted their children to grow up more aware than they had been of the privileged position they held in society. An affluent White woman said she would, "definitely want to discuss the inequalities that exist in the U.S. I think just even talking about how I was fortunate to grow up where I didn't have to worry about my parents being able to afford rent. I didn't have to worry about food insecurity, housing, and stability." An affluent White man wanted his children to know: "There are a lot of people who don't get the opportunities that you get because they come from very different social classes." An affluent Black man would tell his children that "the social class that they're born into is going to give them the certain advantages in life that they're not going to even recognize."

Some affluent participants wanted their children to understand that the amount you earn depends on opportunities you have and not wholly on how hard you work: "People come from different places, they come from different backgrounds, they have different means growing up. And that changes what opportunities they'll have available to them. Yeah, that it's not something as simple as you work harder and you get more money. Yeah, that money is not a reflection of how hard you work" (affluent White man). "People could work hard and still not make that much. I would want my kids to be aware of how much money their parents make and where that puts them in the spectrum, but also how that doesn't necessarily reflect on their parent's goodness or badness or work ethic or merit, because there's so many other factors that go into that" (affluent White woman).

Lower-income participants had gained upward social mobility and many now had concerns about raising children who would grow up with much more privilege than they had. They wanted their children to understand their privilege and did not want them to develop the sense of entitlement they had seen in many of their affluent classmates. A lower-income Black man wanted to be sure his children were "aware of my experience, and that they don't grow up with a presumed privilege and that they are aware of both

sides of the coin.” Other lower-income participants expressed similar desires: “I would want my kids to keep thinking about privilege. ... just being aware of your own privilege” (lower-income Black woman). “I would also not want them to be extremely privileged children. And I would still want them to have jobs and just be very cognizant of all of the privilege that they've been given and how lucky they are” (lower-income Black woman).

Lower-income participants attributed many of the character traits they had developed to their class origins and took pride in these traits. Because everything was not given to them, they had learned to work hard for things, had developed inner strength, self-reliance and independence. They had acquired an appreciation for the opportunities they had been given.¹² They wanted their children to possess these character traits that had enabled them to get so far in life. A lower-income White woman said, “There are things that you learn when you don't have everything, that I think are really important to a person's character. And so the idea of figuring out how to help my hypothetical children grow up to be responsible, caring people is certainly not impossible.” A lower-income White man hoped his children would have “similar values and respect for hard work, that I fear some kids who are raised in an upper-class background don't fully appreciate.” A lower-income Black woman said:

I can't be upset about the way I was raised, because in exchange for not having more money or anything like that, what I had instead was this inner strength in knowing that I could get through anything. So, for [my children], they come from a long line of strong people. And they can get through anything. And even if a decision is made or something happens to where they're not as financially blessed as we are now, they can still get back there.

A final message to children about social class was commonly expressed by members of all four groups – the desire for their children to avoid judging people based on their social class, and to treat everyone equally. The underpinnings of this message was, for some, laid down at Amherst. Through getting to know people from class backgrounds very different than their own, forming close relationships with classmates of a different class backgrounds, participants had gotten past their class differences and found commonalities to build upon. An affluent Black man had come to believe class differences made up “so little in who we are. Only as much or as little as we want them to be.” As a consequence of seeing that commonality, a lower-income White man would pass on this message: “Just treat everybody with dignity. And the person's worth isn't about their class.” Other typical comments included: “The worst thing that they could possibly do, given their luck in life, is to look down upon someone in a lower social class” (lower-income Black man). “You should treat everybody the same even if you can clearly

tell they have more than you or less than you” (affluent Black woman). Participants wanted their kids to be “open to people from different backgrounds and not judging them based on that” (affluent White man), to *never* think “you’re above anyone else regardless of where you come from. No matter how high or good, always be good to somebody below you or somebody you perceive to be below you” (affluent Black man), and to be “accepting of people of all backgrounds” (affluent White woman).

Discussion

Most of the arguments made for the importance of having a diverse class have focused on racial diversity. The findings from the earlier stages of this research, as well as the results of this age 30 follow-up make clear that important learning occurs from being part of a socio-economic diverse class as well.¹³ At age 30, reflecting back at their Amherst experience, only 14% of participants attributed any of their learning about social class to the classroom. This is consistent with their reports as graduating seniors, at which time only 17% of participants had reported learning about class through the curriculum.¹⁴ In sharp contrast, 79% of the participants looked back and clearly recalled learning about social class through their interactions with peers of another social class. Through relationships with affluent peers, lower-income participants got a close-up view of the privileges wealthier people possessed, of the greater opportunities they had, and of the nature of the world they inhabited. They learned from affluent classmates the skills, knowledge, tastes and preferences that would enable them fit into and function in an upper-middle class world.¹⁵ Affluent participants came to see the extent to which their lower-income classmates’ experiences differed from their own. They gained an understanding of their own privileged position in society, something most had taken for granted growing up and had never really considered.

While lower-income participants acquired more *elite* forms of cultural capital at Amherst, they should not be viewed as having come to Amherst with no capital of their own. They brought their own *aspirational* capital, i.e., the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, as well as *navigational capital*, i.e., the ability to sustain high academic achievement despite stressful events and conditions that put that achievement at risk.¹⁶ These two forms of capital were crucial to their success.

The learning that participants gained at Amherst about social class was reflected in the messages they would pass on to their children. At age 30 most affluent participants wanted to be sure their children grew up aware of their privileged position in society and the advantages that accrued to them. Lower-income participants had gained upward social mobility and wanted to make sure that their children would not have the sense of entitlement and lack awareness of privilege that they had seen in their affluent classmates. They wanted their children to develop the character traits ascribed to their initial class backgrounds, the ones that had gotten them to Amherst. Participants from all

four groups had become less critical of others based on class, and wanted to be sure their children would not judge people based on their social class.

High achieving students from lower-income backgrounds have historically been at a disadvantage in terms of admission to selective colleges and universities, and have been relegated to attend colleges with fewer resources and lower graduation rates.¹⁷ Yet they have their best chance of attaining upward social mobility by attending selective institutions like Amherst where they have a 90% graduation rate.¹⁸ Attendance at elite schools increases the chance of attaining a degree, pursuit of graduate education, as well as enhancing graduates' career outcomes and economic earnings.¹⁹ Elite colleges offer more resources and supports that increase retention, beginning with sufficient financial aid so students do not have to work long hours. Other examples include access to writing centers, tutoring, close mentoring relationships with a distinguished faculty, psychological counseling, programming to build resilience and reduce loneliness, depression, and anxiety. In preparation for future success, lower-income students at elite schools get assistance making connections to and they receive funding for summer research opportunities or internships, and top employers recruit from these institutions. Lower-income students also benefit from the opportunity to make connections to people from more elite backgrounds. Thus, the data speak strongly in favor of the changes Amherst College has made in its admission policy of granting many more low-income and first-generation students a place in our student body over the past 15 years. The benefits of access are not just felt by the lower-income students who graduate on a path to upward social mobility, but are a critical part of the education Amherst now offers to its entire student body.

Notes

¹ Piaget (1975/1985).

² Piaget (1975/1985); Ruble, Eisenberg, & Tory Higgins (1994).

³ Hurtado (2003, 2005).

⁴ Hurtado (2007).

⁵ Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin (2005); Bowman (2011); Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin (2002); Hurtado (2003, 2007).

⁶ Aries & Seider (2005).

⁷ Aries (2013).

⁸ Seventy-seven percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 89% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 83% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 63% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) reported learning about social class from peers. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

⁹ Bourdieu & Passeron (1979 [1964]); Lamont & Lareau (1988).

¹⁰ Bourdieu (1977).

¹¹ Sixty-two percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 13$), 89% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 0.0% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 0.0% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) spoke of gaining cultural capital at Amherst. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five. Follow-up comparisons of lower-income and affluent participants showed significantly more lower-income than affluent participants showed gains in cultural capital, $\chi^2(1, n = 42) = 20.51, p < .001; \phi = .75$ using a continuity correction.

¹² Aries (2008).

¹³ Aries (2008, 2013); Aries & Seider (2005).

¹⁴ At the time participants were on campus, popular course called “Social Class” was taught in the Sociology Department that addressed social class. That course was taken by more lower-income White than Black participants (36% versus 17%), and by only a single affluent White and a single affluent Black participant. Half the participants had taken a course by the time they graduated where social class was subtopic. Three times as many lower-income as affluent participants (74% versus 26%) had taken such a course (Aries, 2013).

¹⁵ The results are consistent with Aries (2013); Aries & Seider (2005); Kuriloff & Reichert (2003), Lee & Kramer (2013).

¹⁶ Yosso (2005).

¹⁷ Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin (2005); Giancola & Kahlenberg (2016).

¹⁸ Giancola & Kahlenberg (2016).

¹⁹ Giancola & Kahlenberg (2016); Mayhew et al. (2016).

6

Democracy Outcomes

Educational philosophers and educators have argued that a central mission of higher education is to foster the development of attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills essential for active citizenship in a democracy.¹ As the population of the United States becomes increasingly heterogeneous, some educators stress the fact that higher education must prepare students for “the social complexities of diversity and decision-making in a pluralistic society marked by continuing issues of conflict and inequality.”² Some argue that higher education must be responsible for the development of students’ characters in terms of moral and civic virtues and the preparation for roles in society that serve not only themselves but promote the public welfare.³

I was interested in finding out the extent to which participants at age 30 had become actively engaged citizens with an interest in the public good, equipped to work with people different than themselves, and who took leadership in the service of their communities. The attainment of these democracy outcomes was explored by a small set of questions on the on-line survey about voting rates, volunteerism, civic engagement, and citizenship skills and values, but was not covered in the interviews with participants.⁴

Voting Rates

An important part of active citizenship is voting for elected officials at the national, state and local level. According to the Knight Foundation, a non-profit that fosters informed and engaged communities essential for a strong democracy: “Voting is perhaps the quintessential indicator of civic engagement and a well-functioning democracy.”⁵ Voting in local and national elections indicates citizens’ investment in influencing their communities and nationwide issues that matter to them. Participants in this study were questioned about whether they had voted in the 2016 presidential election. Their voting

rates were exceptionally high: 96% of the participants reported voting in that election.⁶ Citizen turnout rates among the voting-age population has been tracked from 1984 to 2016 by level of education.⁷ The highest voting rates in presidential election years were found for those with post-graduate education (80% to 90%), followed by individuals with some college to college graduates (69% to 75%). The voting rates in this study, which is made up of both college graduates and those with post-graduate education, exceeded those averages.

Participants were also asked whether they vote in local and/or state elections. While voter turnout nears 60% in presidential elections, voter turnout for state and local elections is generally about a third of that.⁸ In this sample 82% of the participants reported they vote in state and/or local elections,⁹ a statistic that again far surpassed national averages.¹⁰ Voting rates in state and local elections were similar for participants by race (85% for White versus 78% for Black participants), but voting rates were higher among affluent than lower-income participants (95% versus 70%).¹¹

Volunteerism

Civic engagement is often assessed by examining not only voting rates but also volunteerism. Volunteerism is a form of community involvement that has been considered by researchers to be a measure of “participating in a democratic society.”¹² It is a form of meaningful service in the community.¹³ Participants were given a list of 14 volunteer activities (and could add an activity if missing from the list) and asked to indicate whether or not they had participated as a volunteer in this activity since graduation from Amherst. In total, 89% had volunteered in at least one activity. Forty-two percent of participants had participated in two to four volunteer activities. The activities participated in most frequently were professional organizations (52%), and social service or social welfare organizations (47%). Between 20% and 30% of participants had volunteered in educational organizations (30%); community centers, neighborhood improvement, social-action associations or civil rights groups (27%); political organizations or local government activities (26%); art, discussion, music, reading or study groups; museum board, cultural or historical societies (26%); environmental or conservation activities (23%); alumni activities (e.g., fundraising, recruiting, organizing reunion events (21%); youth organizations (e.g., Little League coach, scouting) (21%); and national charities (e.g., American Cancer Society, Red Cross) (21%). The activities with the lowest percent of participation were religious activities (not including worship services) (14%); groups reflecting gender or sexual orientation (11%); groups reflecting racial/ethnic identity (9%); and service organizations (e.g. Rotary, Junior Chamber of Commerce (2%). No race and class differences were found in the number of volunteer activities participants had engaged in since college.¹⁴ Nationally, for people age 25 or over, 38.8% of individuals who completed a college degree or beyond volunteer.¹⁵ The

rate of participation in volunteer activities by the Amherst participants was strikingly higher than the national rates.

Participants were also asked to indicate which volunteer activities they had participated in frequently, and whether they had taken a leadership role. Sixty-nine percent of the participants reported having volunteered frequently at one or more service organizations since graduation, and no race and class differences were present.¹⁶ Fifty-three percent of participants had participated *frequently* in one to two service organizations, 16% in three or more service organizations. Fifty-one percent of participants had taken a *leadership* role in a service organization. Forty percent of the participants had taken a leadership role in one or two volunteer organizations, 11% in three or four service organizations.

Importance of Civic Engagement

Three questions on the survey addressed the importance of democratic values, which were defined as values that may serve as motivators for democratic behavior consistent with those values. Participants were asked to rate the importance since college of (1) influencing the political structure (e.g. voting, education campaigns, get-out-the-vote, etc.), (2) influencing social policy, and (3) working to correct social and economic inequalities. These items were rated on a five-point scale from “not at all important” to “extremely important.” Responses to the three items were highly inter-correlated, so they were combined into a single measure of the importance of political and civic engagement. The mean score for the sample was 2.83, indicating political and civic engagement had been “moderately” important in participants’ lives since college. Responses did not differ significantly by race or class.¹⁷

The importance of civic engagement to participants at age 30 was addressed by an affluent Black woman at one point in her interview:

The thing that's changed about me since leaving Amherst is that I feel more a part of and responsible to the place that I live in. I don't think I had a sense of civic accountability when I was a college student in a way that I think a lot of young people probably do. I didn't feel like that community was a real one, if that makes sense, in a way that I feel like the place I live in now is. So, I think I've just become more politically active. It would be a far stretch to say that I'm an activist, but I am more involved in politics.

Interest in public affairs

Taking an interest in public affairs is often viewed as helping to promote the public welfare. Thus, an expressed interest in public affairs was used as a measure of democratic tendencies. Participants indicated on a *3-point scale* whether, since graduation, they

became “less interested,” “remained the same,” or “more interested” in public affairs. Participants’ interest in public affairs increased over the years since graduation. Affluent participants became “more interested” in public affairs (mean score was 2.86). Lower-income participants’ responses fell midway between their interest remaining the same and becoming more interested (mean score was 2.46). No significant differences were found by class or race.¹⁸

Development of Citizenship Skills at Amherst

Participants were asked four questions about the extent to which their educational and social experience at Amherst helped them develop the skills needed for participation in a diverse democracy. Each question was rated on a five-point scale from “not at all” to “a great deal.” Responses to the four questions were not highly inter-correlated so they were treated as individual variables. No significant race or class differences were found between the participants on the development of any of the four skills. Overall, participants reported that their educational and social experience at Amherst helped them somewhat in developing citizenship skills.

The first skill examined was the ability to be an effective leader.¹⁹ The mean score for the sample was 3.60, indicating participants reported their educational and social experience at Amherst helped them “somewhat” to “a lot” in developing their ability to be an effective leader. Three additional skills were examined: the development of their interest in being an active member of their community,²⁰ their commitment to social justice,²¹ and the development of participants’ ability to work effectively and get along well with people of different races/cultures.²² The means on these skills ranged from 2.98 to 3.38 indicating that participants felt their educational and social experience at Amherst helped them “somewhat” in developing these skills.

Discussion

The participants in this study, be they Black or White, affluent or lower-income showed evidence of having become engaged citizens. Voting rates in the 2016 presidential election and in state and local elections, as well as rates of participation in volunteer activities far exceeded national averages. Participants perceived their educational and social experience at Amherst to have helped somewhat in the development of skills necessary for active citizenship in a pluralistic democracy – in developing their ability to work effectively and get along well with people of different races/cultures, in developing their interest in being an active member of their community, and in developing their commitment to social justice. They felt Amherst was somewhat more helpful in developing their ability to be effective leaders. Many students at the college take part in one or more co-curricular activities, e.g., athletic teams, student government, cultural groups, religious groups, etc. These groups offer students many

opportunities to gain leadership skills, positions many participants may have taken in high school as well, and participants continued to take leadership after graduation in volunteer organizations. Since college, half of the participants had assumed leadership roles in volunteer activities.

It is impossible to determine from this study what role the diversity in the student body played in producing the democracy outcomes. The small sample size and lack of a control group of comparable participants at a college with little socioeconomic and racial diversity makes it impossible to establish causal connections. Large scale survey studies carried out at other institutions demonstrate a link between being part of a diverse student body and citizenship outcomes.

An analysis of two longitudinal data bases revealed that students who reported frequent informal interactions with diverse peers gave greater importance to influencing political structures and to helping others in difficulty. They were more likely to report involvement in cleaning up the environment and to participate in community action programs.²³ Analysis of data from the entering Class of 2000 at ten public research universities revealed that those students who reported frequent contact with diverse peers were more likely to vote in federal and state elections.²⁴ Further, positive informal interactions with diverse peers was related to significant changes in democratic sensibilities including interest in poverty issues, concern for the public good, and preparation for roles in society that serve not only themselves but promote the public welfare.

Nicholas Bowman, a professor and researcher of higher education conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between diversity experiences during college and the development of civic engagement. He defined civic engagement by both civic behaviors (e.g., service, political activities) as well as “commitment to and valuation of social action, social justice orientation, leadership skills, perspective taking, and intercultural knowledge and understanding.”²⁵ Students who had more interactions with racially diverse peers showed a higher amount of civic engagement. Strikingly, taking diversity coursework or participating in co-curricular diversity experiences was less predictive of civic engagement than having interpersonal interactions with racially diverse peers.

Other longitudinal studies also show a relationship between diversity experiences and democracy outcomes. A longitudinal study that followed college students for 13 years post-graduation found that diversity experiences during college were positively correlated with volunteer work in their mid-30s.²⁶ Another study that followed students thirteen years after college entry found that alumni who were more involved in diversity as undergraduates were more likely to see engagement with their communities and nation as an important part of their post-college lives, and much more likely to rate working effectively and getting along well with people of other races/cultures as important.²⁷ In addition, positive informal interactions with diverse peers was related to

significant increases in students' pluralistic orientation, including their interest in poverty issues as well as concern for the public good. The research studies reviewed above are based on much larger samples than the present one.

Clearly many participants possess the attitudes, values, and skills needed for citizenship in a democracy, and are civically engaged. Many are leading lives consistent with ideals set out in the college's mission statement – that graduates will “link learning with leadership—in service to the College, to their communities, and to the world beyond.”²⁸ Participants felt their educational and social experiences at Amherst contributed to their ability to be effective leaders. But participants also felt their experiences at Amherst contributed only somewhat in developing their interest in being active members of their community and in developing their commitment to social justice. These outcomes are not part of college's mission but are worthy of consideration in thinking about the scope of the education Amherst hopes to offer its students.

Notes

¹ Banks (2007); Bowen (1977); Bowen & Bok (1998); Bowman (2011); Boyte & Hollander (1999); Checkoway (2001); Colby & Ehrlich (2000); Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin (2002); Gutmann (1987); Hurtado (2003, 2007); Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano (2012); Ostrander (2004).

² Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar (2008), p 215.

³ Colby & Ehrlich (2000).

⁴ Questions used to assess democracy outcomes were derived from Wade-Golden, Matlock & Gurin (2008/2015).

⁵ Knight Foundation (2015).

⁶ Ninety-three percent of the lower-income White ($N = 13$), 100% of the affluent White ($N = 13$), 100% of the lower-income Black ($N = 9$) and 89% of the affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) had voted in the election. A χ^2 test could not be computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

⁷ See the United States Election Project (n.d.) <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/demographics> (accessed March 19, 2020).

⁸ See Knight Foundation (2015), https://s3.amazonaws.com/kf-site-legacy-media/feature_assets/www/local-vote/voter-dropoff.pdf (accessed March 19, 2020).

⁹ Seventy-one percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 14$), 67% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 9$), 100% of affluent White participants ($N = 13$), and 89% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) voted in local and/or state elections. A χ^2 test could not be computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹⁰ See Knight Foundation (2015), https://s3.amazonaws.com/kf-site-legacy-media/feature_assets/www/local-vote/voter-dropoff.pdf (accessed March 19, 2020). Voter turnout for mayoral elections was tracked in the 144 largest U.S. cities and ranged from 21% to 25% between 1999 and 2011.

¹¹ A chi-square test of independence was not performed as two cells had expected counts less than five.

¹² Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), p. 277.

¹³ Wade-Golden, Matlock & Gurin (2008/2015).

¹⁴ For the number of service organizations participants had participated in since college: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 3.29$, $SD = 2.27$; for affluent White participants $N = 12$, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.61$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 5.11$, $SD = 2.89$; for affluent Black participants $N = 8$, $M = 3.50$, $SD = 2.33$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 39) = 1.22$, $p = .277$, $\eta_p^2 = .030$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 39) = 1.98$, $p = .168$, $\eta_p^2 = .048$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 39) = 1.37$, $p = .249$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$. The overall mean number of volunteer activities that participants participated in since college was 3.72.

¹⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016).

¹⁶ For the number of service organizations that participants had engaged in frequently since college: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 1.21$, $SD = 1.63$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 1.16$, $SD = .99$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.00$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 1.56$, $SD = 1.51$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .045$, $p = .833$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = 1.12$, $p = .297$, $\eta_p^2 = .027$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .004$, $p = .950$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. The overall mean number of volunteer activities that participants participated in frequently was 1.36.

¹⁷ The three items were averaged to form a scale measuring the importance of political and civic engagement. The scale was reliable, Chronbach's $\alpha = .80$. Higher scores indicate giving more importance to political and civic engagement. For levels of political and civic engagement: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.23$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 3.05$, $SD = .86$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.67$, $SD = .90$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.02$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .06$, $p = .803$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .96$, $p = .334$, $\eta_p^2 = .023$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .14$, $p = .714$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$.

¹⁸ For interest in public affairs increasing since college: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 2.43$, $SD = .76$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 2.93$, $SD = .28$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.56$, $SD = .73$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 2.78$, $SD = .44$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = 4.02$, $p = .052$, $\eta_p^2 = .089$. The mean for affluent participants was 2.86, for lower-income participants was 2.47. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .003$, $p = .959$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .58$, $p = .450$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$. The overall mean for the sample was 2.67.

¹⁹ For the ability to be an effective leader: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 3.71$, $SD = .61$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 3.23$, $SD = .83$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.66$, $SD = .71$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 3.89$, $SD = .78$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .34$, $p = .562$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$. There was no

significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = 1.87, p = .179, \eta_p^2 = .044$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = 2.50, p = .122, \eta_p^2 = .057$.

²⁰ For interest in being an active member of one's community: for lower-income White participants $N = 14, M = 3.21, SD = .89$; for affluent White participants $N = 13, M = 2.85, SD = .69$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9, M = 2.89, SD = .93$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9, M = 2.89, SD = .60$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = .58, p = .450, \eta_p^2 = .014$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .34, p = .562, \eta_p^2 = .008$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .58, p = .450, \eta_p^2 = .014$.

²¹ For commitment to social justice: for lower-income White participants $N = 14, M = 3.64, SD = 1.01$; for affluent White participants $N = 13, M = 2.92, SD = 1.04$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9, M = 3.33, SD = .87$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9, M = 3.44, SD = 1.01$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = 1.02, p = .319, \eta_p^2 = .024$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .12, p = .728, \eta_p^2 = .003$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = 1.89, p = .176, \eta_p^2 = .044$.

²² For the ability to work effectively and get along well with people of different races/cultures: for lower-income White participants $N = 14, M = 3.79, SD = 1.05$; for affluent White participants $N = 13, M = 2.92, SD = .76$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9, M = 3.33, SD = .87$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9, M = 3.44, SD = 1.01$. There was no significant effect of social class, $F(1, 41) = 1.76, p = .192, \eta_p^2 = .041$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .02, p = .904, \eta_p^2 = .000$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = 2.96, p = .093, \eta_p^2 = .067$.

²³ Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin (2002).

²⁴ Hurtado (2003).

²⁵ Bowman (2011), p. 30.

²⁶ Bowman, Brandenberger, Hill, & Lapsley (2011).

²⁷ Wade-Golden, Matlock, & Gurin (2008/2015).

²⁸ See <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/facts/mission> (accessed March 19, 2020).

7

The Pathway to Upward Social Mobility

Americans have a longstanding belief in the American Dream – that with hard work and determination a person can rise in society. They believe too that individuals should have the opportunity to “move up the ladder of accomplishment as far as their talents, character, and determination will take them.”¹ College can be a ticket to the American Dream. Indeed, considerable research shows that the attainment of a college education produces clear career and economic benefits.² Moreover, attendance at selective schools like Amherst increases both the chance of degree attainment and pursuit of graduate education, and increases graduates’ career outcomes and economic earnings.³ Thus Amherst College’s commitment to enrolling high achieving lower-income and first-generation students likely increases life opportunities and outcomes for these students.

Completing four years of coursework at an elite residential college like Amherst offers lower-income students more than just a credential, i.e., a BA from a prestigious college. As noted in Chapter 5, exposure to middle and upper middle-class people and environments can lead to the acquisition of new forms of *cultural capital*. Further, over four years at the college lower-income students gain access to new forms of *social capital*, i.e. interpersonal connections and networks of relationships beneficial to acquiring desired outcomes. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu used the concept of social capital to help explain the reproduction of inequality from one generation to the next.⁴ Wealthy people traditionally draw on the “old boy’s network” for connections to jobs, which helps maintain their advantageous position, while the social networks possessed by the working class give them access to lower-prestige, lower-wage jobs. Lower-income students at an elite college like Amherst form relationships with people of a higher social class, be they faculty, classmates and their parents, or alumni, individuals who are outside of their embedded networks. Those people become part of their new social networks. They provide lower-income students access to new forms of information,

career development advice and support, and can be beneficial to the acquisition of desired internships and jobs, and career success.⁵ Beyond gaining cultural and social capital, aspirations may be raised through exposure to classmates who are striving to get into top graduate schools, as well as to faculty members and alumni whose achievements and careers model possibilities for their lives that may be well beyond what they have imagined for themselves.⁶

Acquisition of Social Capital

A person's social capital plays an important role in helping promote career success.⁷ At age 30, study participants were asked whether they had ever drawn on connections they made at Amherst or the alumni network. Almost two-thirds of participants (65%) said they had done so. The percentage of participants who drew on social capital acquired at Amherst was similar by race or class.⁸

The social capital that students possessed when they entered college was based primarily on their parents' and extended family members' networks, and thus differed by social class. In seeking her first jobs after graduation from Amherst, a lower-income White woman did not make use of social capital gained at Amherst. She had taken jobs she knew she was "overqualified for, but it was employment." She saw the choices she made as class related:

The way that I got the two major jobs I had before grad school was through starting out with a temping agency, and that was at my mom's suggestion because that's how she ended up getting a lot of her jobs. And she does a variety of things that can be broadly termed secretarial. And so, whenever she got herself in the position of having to find a new job, that's the resource that she would use. And so, I was like ahh, employment. That's the route I went. ... When I was getting down to the nuts and bolts of how do I find work, the best resource I had for that was talking to my family. And their experience of how to find work was very much related to the class that we came from.

In the years after graduation, she observed classmates draw upon connections formed at Amherst, and did so herself for future jobs.

Connections to Professors

An important form of social capital was connections to professors. Professors provided recommendations to fellowships, internships, graduate programs, and jobs. Coming from an elite college, these letters carried a lot of weight. Additionally, professors

gave information, advice, and assistance in thinking about and planning for participants' futures. Professors were also able to use their personal networks to connect students to desired future opportunities. Forty-two percent of participants reported drawing on connections to professors.⁹ Results did not differ by race or class.

Most affluent participants entered college with an understanding of the "rules of the game" in how to succeed in college. They knew the benefits of getting to know professors and certainly drew on these relationships for connections to career opportunities, recommendations, and advice about future career development. An affluent Black woman who majored in art history got an internship at the Frick Collection "under the guidance and at the recommendation of one of my professors." The internship was very beneficial "for a career path working in museums." One affluent White man spoke of receiving "huge help from the biology faculty for getting into graduate school and getting my fellowship, which paid for graduate school." An affluent White woman spoke of her advisor who "did a very good job mentoring me and encouraging me. ... I could go to her for advice when I needed it. Even after graduation I went to her for career advice for a few years." An affluent White man with a concentration in creative writing had felt like a "directionless, careerless English major, because nobody really talks about the economics of being a writer or the professional side." His creative writing professor was "the one who explained a lot of that stuff to me and made being a writer seem not only fun, but actually a viable career path and taught me a lot about the business of it. And made it seem attainable." An affluent White woman spoke of her thesis advisor as a person who pointed her to success, who "has really helped me a lot with thinking about jobs after graduation, and what to expect going into job interviews and things like that."

Lower-income participants also benefitted greatly from the information, advice, encouragement, recommendations and connections professors provided, though it took longer for some of them to understand the importance of these relationships. A lower-income White man had majored in English: "One of my regrets is that it took me a while to realize that I should be engaging more with professors outside of class. And I started to do that more towards the end of college." He came to see "as an undergraduate student you don't really have much perspective on once you leave Amherst, given that you may know what you want to do, you don't have much perspective on what will get you there. So, I think that's where faculty can really help out, figuring out the steps you need to take to get where you want to go." His remarks are consistent with some lower-income participants' reports as graduating seniors that initially they had not taken advantage of professors' office hours. But over time they grew more comfortable approaching professors and did so, having learned from peers of the benefits that could be gained.¹⁰

Many lower-income participants' parents had limited education and were unable to offer the kind of advice participants needed for their future career development. Professors could help direct and connect students to career paths. A lower-income White

woman sought the guidance of a professor who was “in a position to understand the field I wanted to go into. She was in a position to understand the life that I imagined I might have in the future, and so that's part of the reason why I wanted to talk to her about those things, because I didn't feel like I could talk to my parents about that.” Another lower-income White woman reflected on talking with faculty members about her future: “Mostly it really helped me realize how I thought about the world and what I might do to fit in with it after Amherst, and what was available. That was a big part.” A lower-income Black man had gotten to know several of his professors and spoke of the importance of those relationships. He noted that as a 19-year-old in college, the only older people he had hung out with were family members:

So, to have something of a friendship with another 50-year-old person [i.e., professor] can be beneficial just because they aren't your peers and they aren't your family/parents, and they're someone who you can trust their advice, and someone that's going to, for the most part, tell you something a little bit different. When you ask them a question you're going to get definitely a different answer from your peers, and often even a different answer from your mom or dad.

Other examples of the importance faculty played in providing guidance and launching lower-income participants on their current career paths include a lower-income White woman whose thesis advisor was “very, very much a part of me getting into the [graduate] schools that I got into by his reference. That definitely benefited me.” A lower-income Black woman explained, “My very first research experience was with [my advisor]. So that first summer after my freshman year he hired me. And then he's the one who encouraged me to think about grad school. And he wrote recommendation letters for me for grad school and for the fellowship that I got in grad school.” A lower-income White woman spoke about the important role a faculty member in her major played: “He had actually a very tremendous impact on my graduate school search and where I chose to go. He still has been a huge impact on what I do.”

Access to the Alumni Network

The other most common form of social capital gained at college was access to the alumni network. Connections to alumni were used more frequently by lower-income than affluent participants (45% versus 24%).¹¹ This may be because more affluent students already possessed the types of family connections useful for career advice and opening doors for them. A lower-income Black man noted, “When you come out of Amherst you see the alumni. You see where they're at and how willing they are to help you. You

definitely feel like you have a lot of resources at your disposal.” A lower-income Black man had reached out to alumni:

Just from what I hear, our alumni have probably one of the best response rates for just cold calling or reaching out to someone you've never met. You just know that you both graduated from Amherst. And I think there's definitely a camaraderie around keeping Amherst in the influential position in the professional world. And when people find out you went to Amherst, the alumni usually get excited.

Lower-income participants described taking advantage of the alumni network in such ways as: “I got an interview from a former Amherst alum. I did not get the position, but I did end up as a finalist candidate. ... I got resume and job application advice from other alums” (lower-income White woman). “I actually got my job as a lab tech because my boss himself had gone to Amherst” (lower-income White woman). “Especially early in my career I went through that Amherst alumni network like crazy, yeah, every single investment bank. If you told me a bank, I knew every Amherst person that worked there” (lower-income White man).

When asked if she had used the alumni network, a lower-income Black woman exclaimed, “Oh my gosh, yes.” Through an alum she got an internship over intersession in January and was invited back for a summer internship: “It was an amazing internship. I went to Kenya and I went to Liberia and I went to Mexico with them.” That led to the job she had now:

That was a huge connection through Amherst. Both times, my internship and now my job have been very professionally and personally meaningful to me. And I've grown a lot. And then because our executive director is an Amherst alum, a lot of our donors are Amherst alums. So, I'm connected to a lot of Amherst people right now. Yeah, so I think definitely the Amherst network was very influential.

Another lower-income Black woman talked about the influence an alumnus connection had on her life since graduation:

Right after I graduated, I reached out to an Amherst alumnus who worked at [a film distribution company]. And he was able to get me an internship for the summer. And that was a first-time internship. I was working three, four days a week. That was a really great learning experience and I knew I wanted to work in television. So, it was unpaid but he was willing to take me on and to really teach me a lot about the kind of work that they did. And

it was really great. And even though I didn't end up getting the full-time job offer, we did still stay in touch.

She took a job at a small company where she worked her way up to being the manager of sales operations and systems, and then decided to go on to business school. Her conversations with that alum were “one of the things that helped push me to make that decision as well.”

For participants interested in careers in finance, Amherst alums proved to be great resources. This is just one example: a lower-income Black man who had been a varsity lacrosse player noted, “There’s just a very strong network into finance from lacrosse, so I got a good amount of exposure that way.” He, in turn, steered other Amherst students to his investment bank. He had stayed in touch with the alum who gave him his first paid internship: “I gave him a call 11 days ago to wish him a happy birthday. And that’s eight years after we first met. He has been very helpful in just talking about the transitions from one role to the next, and priorities, graduate education, and he’s been a sounding board.”

Another lower-income Black man was interested in getting into finance. He got an internship while he was at Amherst through an Amherst connection. All three of his first jobs were through Amherst connections. While working at his first job: “I met with a bunch of Amherst people and that led to an intro to this company where one Amherst alum knew a guy that worked at [an alternative investment company]. That’s how I got that job. And then my job at [a top global investment company] was the same guy that I worked with during my summer internship. ... He knew me and called me and hired me essentially.”

For the affluent participants who did draw on the alumni network, they did so for reasons similar to those of the lower-income participants. An affluent white woman reported, “I got my first job out of college because of an Amherst alum. He came to Amherst to interview for a couple paralegal positions. And so that was a direct link.” For an affluent Black man, it took a while to appreciate how important Amherst alumni could be: “Now that I’m entering a different stage in life, I view Amherst differently. Now it’s almost like a networking tool. I don’t think at the time I quite understood what going to Amherst could do for me like later on.” An affluent White man had taken a job at a law firm in order to pay off debt accumulated paying for law school. From the alumni network he had gained “a lot of advice, and definitely in perspective and career paths.” As a result of his Amherst friends and alums: “I certainly have been put in touch with people who have jobs similar to the ones I would like.” Regarding those Amherst connections: “I expect that hopefully when I need to bail out of big law, I can call on [them] to get a job. That’s my plan, so I hope it works.”

Connections to Classmates and Their Parents

A less common form of social capital gained at Amherst was derived from relationships with classmates or the parents of classmates. Fourteen percent of participants indicated drawing upon this type of social capital. A lower-income White man spoke of a classmate who had become one of his best friends: "I probably owe him a lot." When the participant was going through the recruiting process:

None of the big banks came to campus, and I got a job at a small bank. ... But within three months of me being there, [this classmate who] worked at one of the bigger banks where I would have preferred to work ... called me and said, 'Hey, the economy's picking up; we're actually hiring now.' And I went and interviewed and every single thing I've done since then is only because he called me.

A lower-income Black man who played varsity basketball described his long-term relationship with the teammate who had been his captain:

He is somewhat of a mentor to me, and just has always been a little bit ahead of me in terms of maturity and discipline and longer-term vision of life and what's important. He has helped me look at life the right way in a lot of different situations, and has been there for me and literally helped me get my professional basketball job and realized that dream for me, has just been a great friend and someone that I look up to and helped me make a lot of the most difficult decisions I've had to make in the last 10 years.

Parents of classmates proved to be important connections for some participants. A lower-income White woman reported,

I don't come from a family of lawyers, and I thought maybe I wanted to go to law school. I became pretty close over my time at Amherst with the mother of one of my good friends. And she's a lawyer and she gave me great advice about where to go to law school, what to be looking for, and I just learned for the first time about different kinds of law firms or working in the government, that sort of thing.

An affluent Black man had developed a relationship with the father of one of his classmates. The father, who had also gone to Amherst: "invited me to work in his lab over the summer as part of a summer program. And through that I gained interest in research, and ultimately took two jobs from him as well as entered grad school in his school and department." He described the role of this alum in his life as "substantial."

Change in Aspirations

At age 30, participants were asked whether being at Amherst had influenced the aspirations they had and if so, in what way. Lower-income participants were significantly more likely to report that their experience at Amherst raised their aspirations than affluent participants (59% versus 19%).¹² A lower-income White man reported, "It's expected that, in some ways, you go on to do big things and I want to do that."

Lower-income Participants

Lower-income participants could be inspired by the ambitions of their classmates. A lower-income Black man observed the many

great things people were doing. My close friends had great internships and were getting good jobs and cared about their careers and cared about their futures in a way that was good, in a way that was stronger than other communities that I had been a part of. If all your friends are striving for good jobs and are working hard to get good interviews, you're going to at least think about whether you should aspire to those things as well.

A lower-income Black woman spoke of having her own ambition fortified and enhanced by the ambitions of classmates:

I don't think you get to Amherst by not being an ambitious person. But I think it solidified that my ambition was good and okay and has made me want to keep pushing myself career wise, and has made me really value education, and really, really want grad school. Honestly, before I went to Amherst, I never really thought that much about going to grad school. And I just remember my classmates always talking about grad school and wanting to get good grades because they wanted to go to grad school. So, grad school was more solidified for me at Amherst.

Observation of wealthier peers led a lower-income White man to believe: "You can leave Amherst and achieve really amazing things. And that was very motivating. And inspiring." He went on to say, "Wow, okay, I can go here and see the steps forward that someone could take." A lower-income Black man expressed gratitude for the changes he had undergone at Amherst that enabled him to achieve things he never imagined were possible: "Amherst surrounded me with high level people and with the highest-level people. And that was helpful to me in every way. You become wiser, you become more mature, you become more driven, you become more disciplined. ... Amherst was one of the best things that ever happened to me."

For some lower-income participants, observations of alumni trustees, of alums who received honorary degrees at graduation, and knowledge of alumni donations

were inspiring. A lower-income Black man said, “visual representations of what's possible” were all around them:

All you can do is look at the board of directors or look at the most recent donation to the college and see who's being awarded an honorary degree at graduation. [The college] just leaves people with tremendous amounts of success and in wide-ranging fields, who've had a tremendous impact in whatever field they've chosen to pursue and at one point were sitting in the exact same seat you are. I think that's very impactful.

From the perspective of a lower-income Black woman, Black professors modeled qualities that shaped her aspirations for her future development: “It was especially important for me to see the Black professors, and to see how they operated in such a predominately White space, and how they were still able to be successful. I think that was huge. I think they taught me to be a better speaker. And they taught me to be better at doing what I stand for.”

Some lower-income classmates attributed their higher aspirations not to individuals they encountered at Amherst, but to the experience as a whole. When asked if being at Amherst influenced the aspirations they had, a lower-income Black woman said, “Yeah, it definitely did. Because I thought I could do anything. I don't know if there needed to be opportunities available, but I felt like I could do anything. After the campus gives you the system, you can go out and rule the world if you wanted to.”

Affluent Participants

Some affluent participants also reported raised aspirations. An affluent White woman said, “It certainly taught me to aim high coming from such an elite institution. ... So yeah, I think it set the bar high and helped me become the intellectual person I am.” For an affluent White man:

Seeing what people who left Amherst could do on the back of going to Amherst definitely made me think I could do anything in a way maybe going to an enormous public institution wouldn't have made me think. Even going to law school, many people go to one of the best law schools in the country. And I certainly don't know that I ever thought that was even a possibility. But seeing routinely tons of people from Amherst going to Harvard Law School and Yale Law School and Stanford, I was like oh, the fact that I went to Amherst really matters to those people. And that is a realistic thing that is not just a crazy thing you do. And seeing people who

were alums who had prestigious jobs and were recognizable people definitely has impact on what you think is a possible career path.

Sometime after graduating, he went on to Harvard Law School.

When asked whether being at Amherst had changed their aspirations, a few participants, both affluent and lower-income, spoke more of changed aspirations than higher aspirations. Their comments reveal the benefits of a liberal arts education, which exposed them to a wide variety of fields and possible career directions. Some lower-income participants came in thinking narrowly about traditional fields they might go into, e.g., law, medicine, finance. A lower-income Black man said, "Amherst showed me some of the possibilities. I think Amherst, because it allowed me to pursue and further investigate things that I was passionate about while I was here, I think that helped me change again, see the possibilities, but see what possibilities I wanted for myself." A lower-income White woman came to Amherst "intending to go to medical school. And I clearly did not somewhere along the line for a number of reasons, but in part because of the Amherst Russian Department. I switched gears halfway through my undergraduate education and determined that I was not going to pursue medicine that I would instead pursue Russian, which is not a thing that anyone would have ever suggested to me." At the time of her interview she was going into her final year of a PhD program in Slavic languages and literatures. A lower-income White man was a member of Mr. Gad House of Improv, Amherst's improvisational comedy group. He felt that Amherst "shows you a really broad option range. You see people doing a lot of cool stuff, whether it's writers or creative people or business people or athletes or musicians or actors, even my theater, yeah, people from Gads. There's some pretty successful people that come out of Gads. ... It shows you what's possible out there." An affluent White man whose parents were physicians and who became an environmental journalist said, "It was at Amherst where being a writer became a plausible aspiration. Not just something that you did on the side while you had your real job at a patent office or whatever. It was a profession that people had and that was totally viable." Another affluent White man said, "I came in interested in biology, but perhaps more on the applied [side]. But then after Amherst, seeing all the cool faculty members and their interesting jobs and lifestyles and stuff, I became very interested in that, and doing science, and making discoveries and that kind of thing."

Evidence of Upward Social Mobility

As illustrated above, many of the lower-income participants left Amherst equipped with newly acquired forms of social capital and increased aspirations. How then did they compare to their affluent classmates at age 30 in terms of pursuit of a

graduate education, career outcomes and economic earnings? Here are the striking answers.

Pursuit of Graduate or Professional Degrees

At age 30, 73% of participants had either completed a graduate or professional degree or were in a degree program they would soon finish.¹³ Graduate or professional school attendance were comparable by race. Seventy-eight percent of White and 67% of Black participants completed or were soon to complete a graduate or professional degree. More affluent (82%) than lower-income participants (65%) completed or were soon to complete such degrees, but the groups did not differ statistically.¹⁴

Close to half the participants (47%) had completed or were soon to complete a doctoral level degree, either in law (JD), in medicine (MD), or a PhD.¹⁵ The percent of lower-income Black participants who went on for doctoral degrees (22%) was less than that of the other groups. It is worth noting, however, that one lower-income Black participant had completed a PhD in science at one of the nation's top ten programs in her field. Also, the percentage of doctoral degrees attained by lower-income Black participants is not indicative of the achievement of members of this group. Two lower-income black participants had received MBAs from one of the top business schools in the U.S.¹⁶ Two more lower-income Black participants had gone into finance and worked for one of the world's top 10 investment banks, which provide their own rigorous training programs,¹⁷ and another had attained a master's degree in education. The accomplishments of the lower-income White participants were equally impressive. The four lower-income White participants who had completed JDs had all attended one of the top 10 law schools in the U.S.¹⁸

Occupational Attainment

Eight participants were still completing graduate programs (five in PhD programs, two in MBA programs, and one in a JD program) and would be moving into professional roles when they completed their degrees. The occupations of the remaining participants were classified as either managerial (7%) or professional (93%).¹⁹ Three participants were in managerial positions, one lower-income White, one lower-income Black and one affluent White. Race and class were not related to occupational classification.²⁰

Current Personal Income

Six participants out of the 45 who filled out the survey did not disclose their personal income, four of whom were currently in graduate programs. Considerable within-group variability existed in the incomes reported by both affluent and lower-

income participants. Five participants, three lower-income (two White, one Black), and two affluent (one White, one Black) reported earning over \$200,000. Four of them had gone into finance, the fifth into corporate law.

At the other end of the spectrum, five participants (one lower-income White, four affluent White and one affluent Black) reported earning under \$30,000. Participants were not asked whether they received financial help from family or through trust funds, but some affluent participants may have been the recipients of this type of family support. The lower-income White participant and one affluent White participant were in graduate school. One affluent Black participant was trying to make a career as an actress. An affluent White participant was trying to make it as a TV writer. Her parents had moved to L.A. She had stayed at their house while trying to get a TV job: "I don't actually know, if I hadn't had parents, how I would have been able to afford that because it's an onerous process." A second affluent White participant had left the job she had been working at for five and a half years because the job started feeling "more and more like work," and not "something I absolutely loved. And I was ready for some time abroad." Over the next two years she did stints in New Zealand, Australia, Africa, and South America, "doing WWOOFing [World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms], which is work in exchange for accommodations," or taking other jobs along the way to support herself.

The median and modal income for the participants was the \$50,000 - \$75,000 bracket. More of the lower-income participants were at or above the median than affluent participants (50% versus 21%).²¹ It appears with the backup support of parents, a sense of security, or perhaps in some cases with additional income from trust funds, affluent participants were able to work for lower salaries or take extended time off.

Gains in Socioeconomic Status

On the survey, participants were asked to characterize their current socioeconomic status in comparison to the socioeconomic status of their family of origin using a 5-point scale from 1 = "much lower" to 5 = "much higher." At this early point in their adult lives, affluent participants perceived their socioeconomic status to be "slightly lower" than that of their family of origin (mean = 2.04), while lower-income participants perceived their socioeconomic status to be "slightly higher" than their family of origin (mean = 4.04).²²

Discussion

The data reviewed in this chapter demonstrate the benefits that accrued to high achieving lower-income students who gained access to an elite college education. The positive outcomes for lower-income participants are impressive and gratifying. Had these participants not been given the opportunity to attend Amherst, they would likely not have had the same life opportunities and outcomes.

The college provided lower-income participants access to social networks that included professors, alumni, classmates and their families – individuals of a higher social class who could provide information, advice, guidance and support regarding graduate school and careers, many of whom would continue to offer help promoting career growth after graduation. These newly acquired social networks included role models and mentors with the resources to help promote career success, something the networks they possessed growing up could not offer.²³ Many participants came to understand how important such mentors could be, and some had, themselves, become mentors to current students. Two-thirds of lower-income participants made use of such connections to advance their educations and careers.

Almost 60% of the lower-income participants reported their experience at Amherst raised their aspirations. This increase in aspirations can be understood through the lens of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. Habitus has to do with the dispositions acquired through internalizing perceptions and attitudes of people in one's social world, dispositions that guide people's aspirations and actions in accordance with the past experiences of people like themselves.²⁴ Immersion in a more affluent community with people of a higher social class helped lower-income participants develop a more elite habitus as students adapted to the dominant culture at the college.²⁵ Participants acquired new worldviews and understandings of what is possible, and developed new dispositions. Lower-income participants found new models of success, gained new ideas about paths they might pursue and what they might accomplish with their lives. The expectations and aspirations of lower-income participants became more similar to those of their classmates of a higher social class who surrounded them. Many lower-income participants gained inspiration to seek a graduate school education and to enter occupations they had never considered growing up.²⁶ Lower-income participants arrived on campus with what professor of education, Tara Yosso, has called *aspirational* capital, i.e., the "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers."²⁷ Their college experience at Amherst gave them a new range of possibilities to aspire to, as well as support, advice, and connections necessary to actualize their new aspirations.

Recognizing the importance of promoting the career development of lower-income and first-generation students, important changes have taken place in the programming and resources offered at the college since these participants graduated in 2009. The college established the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning. Beginning in the first semester, staff at the center reach out to lower-income and first-generation students to explain the importance of building relationships and networks to help further their career success, and assist students in finding meaningful summer opportunities. The Loeb Center provides the resources and advising necessary to shape students' way forward "through internships, networking, jobs, alumni connections, or

reflection on how your academic experiences, interests, skills, and values can align with a meaningful career.”²⁸

Summers provide an important time for students to engage in pre-professional internships to explore possible career interests or as a step to careers, but many advantageous internships are unpaid. Since these study participants graduated, the college has established the Meiklejohn Fellows Program for low-income and/or first-generation students. The Program provides them support for summer internships or research during their first or second summer at Amherst.²⁹ The Charles Hamilton Houston Internship Program is now open to all students and provides substantive summer internship opportunities both in the U.S. and abroad.³⁰ Internships that are not paid by the employer can be covered with stipends from the College’s endowed internship funds. Importantly, the Charles Hamilton Houston Internship Program offers students “360° support throughout the entire internship cycle, including preparatory advising, professional skill development, and assistance throughout their summer experiences.” Many more paid opportunities are now available for students to engage in research with Amherst faculty members over the summer, which introduce students to career paths they might want to follow, and provide important connections to faculty.

By age 30, 65% of lower-income participants had attended graduate or professional school, a number well beyond the 37% national average in 2015 for individuals with a BA.³¹ While nationally only 6% of college graduates who enroll in graduate programs pursue a doctoral degree, 43% of lower-income participants had received or were soon to receive doctoral degrees, most from one the top 10 ranked schools in their fields. The outcomes are inspiring.

All participants were working managerial or professional jobs, or would move into these types of positions when they completed graduate school. By contrast, studies of lower-income students who attend non-elite colleges report class differences in outcomes. For example, a follow-up study of students who attended four-year non-elite colleges revealed that students’ social class of origin had a continuing impact on their outcomes nine years after entry to college.³² Students from lower-income backgrounds reported lower incomes and lower levels of educational attainment than students from affluent backgrounds.

The lower-income participants had attained upward social mobility. They characterized themselves as having attained a slightly higher socioeconomic status than their parents, while the affluent students felt they had attained a slightly lower socioeconomic status. Participants are in the early stages of their careers, so these outcomes may change over time. Movement between classes, however, changes identities and relationships.³³ Some lower-income students experience “a painful dislocation between an old and newly developing habitus.”³⁴ After four years at college they have changed in ways that family and friends left behind in their home communities have not.

In the next chapter I will examine the challenges that participants faced maintaining ties with those they have left behind, as they bridged the two worlds they were now a part of – the world participants grew up in and the world they entered.

Notes

¹ Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin (2005), p. 4.

² Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak (2016).

³ Giancola & Kahlenberg (2016); Mayhew et al. (2016).

⁴ Bourdieu (1986).

⁵ Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden (2001).

⁶ See Baxter & Britton (2001); Horvat & Davis (2011); Lee & Kramer (2013).

⁷ Seibert et al. (2001).

⁸ Fifty-four percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 78% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 75% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 56% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) reported drawing upon social capital acquired at Amherst. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

⁹ Forty-six percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 13$), 44% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 9$), 33% of affluent White participants ($N = 12$), and 12% of affluent Black students ($N = 9$) drew on faculty social capital. A χ^2 test was not calculated because to cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁰ Aries (2013).

¹¹ Thirty-nine percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 9$), 85% of affluent White participants ($N = 12$), and 11% of affluent Black students ($N = 9$) reported drawing on the alumni network for connections to jobs. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹² Fifty-four percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 67% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 25% of affluent White ($N = 12$) and 11% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reporting acquiring higher aspirations. A χ^2 test was not calculated because two cells had expected values less than five. A follow-up chi-square test of independence was done looking at the relationship between social class (lower-income/affluent) and raised aspirations (yes/no). Lower-income participants were more likely to report raised aspirations than the affluent participants did, $\chi^2(1, N = 43) = 5.63$, $p = .018$, $\phi = .41$ with continuity correction.

¹³ Seventy-one percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 14$), 56% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 9$), 85% of affluent White participants ($N = 13$), and 78% of affluent Black students ($N = 9$) reported completing or being about to complete a graduate degree. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁴ Sixty-five percent of lower-income participants ($N = 23$) and 82% of affluent participants ($N = 22$) reported completing or being about to complete a graduate degree, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = .849$, $p = .357$, $\phi = .208$ with continuity correction.

¹⁵ Fifty-seven percent of lower-income White participants ($N = 14$), 22% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 9$), 54% of affluent White participants ($N = 13$) and 44% of affluent Black students ($N = 9$) reported attaining, or being about to attain a doctoral degree, either a JD, MD, or PhD. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

¹⁶ See <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-schools/mba-rankings> (accessed April 9, 2020).

¹⁷ See <https://www.advratings.com/banking/top-investment-banks> (accessed April 9, 2020).

¹⁸ See <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings> (accessed April 9, 2020).

¹⁹ Participants' jobs were classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (International Labour Organization, 2010). The International Standard Classification of Occupations is a structure that organizes jobs into 10 groups according to the skill level and specialization of job tasks and duties performed.

²⁰ Ninety-one percent of lower-income White ($N = 11$), 86% of lower-income Black participants ($N = 7$), 90% of affluent White participants ($N = 10$) and 100% of affluent Black participants ($N = 7$) held professional positions. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected values less than five.

²¹ Fifty-three percent of lower-income participants ($N = 19$) were at or above the median, while 22% of affluent participants ($N = 18$) were at or above the median income. A chi-square test showed no significant relationship between social class (lower-income/affluent) and income bracket (above \$75,000/at or below \$50,000 - \$75,000), $\chi^2(N = 37) = 2.46$, $p = .117$ with correction for continuity.

²² For participants' socioeconomic status in comparison to the socioeconomic status of their families of origin: for lower-income White participants $N = 14$, $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.04$; for affluent White participants $N = 13$, $M = 2.15$, $SD = .80$; for lower-income Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.05$; for affluent Black participants $N = 9$, $M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.05$. Lower-income participants characterized their current SES as significantly higher relative to their family of origin than affluent participants did, $F(1, 41) = 46.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .531$. There was no significant effect of race, $F(1, 41) = .07$, $p = .80$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. There was no significant interaction between social class and race, $F(1, 41) = .40$, $p = .53$, $\eta_p^2 = .010$.

²³ The career literature has looked at the positive effects of mentoring on career outcomes, but this literature has not been connected to the literature on the positive effects of social capital on career success (Seibert et al., 2001).

²⁴ Bourdieu (1977; 1990).

²⁵ Bourdieu argued that habitus can be transformed, that expectations and aspirations may be raised or lowered (Bourdieu, 1990). See Baxter & Britton (2001); Horvat & Davis (2011; Lee & Kramer (2013).

²⁶ These data are consistent with previous research findings that through exposure to classmates with a different habitus, lower-income students adopt a more elite habitus (Baxter & Britton 2001; Horvat & Davis, 2011; Lee & Kramer, 2013).

²⁷ Yosso (2005), p. 77.

²⁸ See <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers> (accessed February 25, 2020).

²⁹ See <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/post-graduation-planning-for-first-generation-and-or-low-income-students/meiklejohn-fellows> (accessed February 25, 2020).

³⁰ See <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/houston-internship-program> (accessed February 25, 2020). See also <https://www.amherst.edu/news/press-releases/node/726879> (accessed February 25, 2020).

³¹ Baum & Steele (2017).

³² Walpole (2003).

³³ Aries (2008, 2013); Aries & Seider (2005); Hurtado (2007); Horvat & Davis (2011); Kuriloff & Reichert (2003); Lee & Kramer (2013).

³⁴ Baxter & Britton (2001), p. 99.

8

Bridging Two Worlds

The affluent participants in this study had experienced little discontinuity between the culture and communities in which they grew up and the one they encountered at Amherst. The world at Amherst felt comfortable and familiar to them. They came to the college well-equipped by their families with elite cultural capital. They knew the “rules of the game” and possessed the necessary skills and abilities to thrive academically and socially. As an affluent Black participant put it, “I felt like I came pre-assimilated.”

By contrast, the lower income participants arrived at Amherst and became immersed in a world strikingly different from the one they had grown up in – a world of wealth and privilege and of great resources. They lacked the forms of cultural or social capital their affluent peers possessed, and faced a steep learning curve in order to thrive. They encountered more diversity in ethnicities, lifestyles, beliefs and values than they had known previously. Many experienced accompanying feelings of pain, ambivalence, and alienation.¹ As described by a lower-income Black woman from a rural White farming town in New England, her transition to Amherst “emotionally was very hard, very hard in terms of culture shock.”

It is important to note that 64% of the lower-income Black participants in the original 2005 sample had received scholarships to attend selective boarding schools or private day schools replete with resources and populated predominantly by White students. Sociologist Tony Jack has labeled such students of color from low-income backgrounds the privileged poor.² While the culture at Amherst was dramatically different from their home communities, these students had already gained familiarity with a world like Amherst in high school and found little at Amherst shocking. They had acquired skills and knowledge that would help enable them to succeed at Amherst. The remaining lower-income Black participants had attended poorer quality local public schools or parochial schools and faced a greater set of challenges on campus. Tony Jack

has labeled such lower-income students of color the doubly disadvantaged. Amherst was a world they had neither been exposed to or imagined.

Jack did not study lower-income White students, a group that has had much less opportunity for scholarships to private schools. In fact, only one lower-income White participant in this study had a scholarship to attend private school. It is not surprising that the lower-income White participants experienced much greater challenges in their first year of college than the lower-income Black group did on average.³ As one lower-income White woman from a rural community in the mid-west put it in her first interview when she arrived at Amherst in 2005: "I feel like I've been dropped on Mars or something. I mean it's so different." But over four years at the college, the differences in high school background become less important as lower-income students went on to acquire new forms of cultural and social capital, new interests, and aspirations on their way to becoming upwardly mobile.

Lower-income participants could not fully anticipate the changes in identity that would occur for them over four years at Amherst College as they assimilated to a more elite environment. Nor could their parents. The changes were not ones their family or friends at home were making, creating a gulf between participants and the people they left behind. By graduation participants might no longer speak or dress in the same way, or share the same interests or worldviews as those of family and friends at home. As a consequence, they would no longer fit in as easily at home. At the end of their first year of college in 2006, participants had a foot in two different worlds and a third of the lower-income study participants had reported difficulty bridging those two worlds.⁴ As graduation approached in 2009, that percentage had nearly doubled.⁵ A college education enabled upward social mobility, but there was also a serious cost.

Little is known about how social mobility affects lower-income students' interactions with people from home communities after graduation. Most researchers have focused on the challenges these students face in their relationships with family and friends left behind during the college years.⁶ In this chapter I will examine participants' relationships at age 30 with family and friends from home communities, and compare them to friendships formed at Amherst. The data show that the challenges of bridging two worlds persisted for many lower-income participants at age 30. But what also emerged from the interviews were unexpected interactions between race and class – instances where the experience of participants of the same social class differed depending on whether they were Black or White.

The Challenges of Bridging Two Worlds

Over the 12 years since the lower-income participants had left home for college, most had experienced upwardly social mobility, and had changed in ways that families

and friends left behind had not. At the point of graduation in 2009, 82% of the lower-income White and 86% of the lower-income Black participants in the age-30 sample had reported difficulty juggling two worlds. At age 30, that percentage had dropped. Just over half of the lower-income participants (55%) reported struggling with bridging the world of home and their current community, while no affluent participants reported this struggle.⁷ In all but one case those lower-income participants also reported that this struggle had increased in magnitude since graduation. In their interviews lower-income participants described challenges they faced arising from changes in themselves and their lives that created distance with family members, as well as internal struggles.

Daily Clash of Cultures

Upon graduation, a lower-income Black man returned home, moved in with his parents, and found a job in the city in which he had grown up. After much networking, two years later he landed a desired job in finance, the type of job he most wanted. His parents “weren't living in the best neighborhood” and he described his experience of walking downtown to work each day this way:

You're going from the hood basically to walking into corporate America and a Fortune 100 company or whatever every day. Then you walk on the streets and you see the struggle first hand of basically your community. It can have a bit of a mental effect on you, having to experience the dynamic of going essentially to two vastly different ends of the world on a daily basis.

He then moved on to a job in New York City: “There will always be a struggle, mainly because there's always going to be a huge difference in those different communities and those different worlds. I've gained the skills to become better at dealing with those dissimilarities, but it's certainly a struggle.”

Change in Financial Means

Many lower-income participants now had more discretionary spending money than their families did when they were growing up, or that their families currently possessed. For some, their greater income created feelings of distance and guilt in their relationship to family members. A lower-income White man had grown up in a “very working-class mountain town” but now lived in a city and made “more money than my parents ever made, and live a very different lifestyle.” This gulf between him and his family members created feelings of discomfort. A lower-income Black woman had become a doctor: “Sometimes it's hard. Especially as an adult because I think at 29 I live

in a nicer home than my mom. ... I think that's hard, just knowing that I'm 30 years younger than my mom and I live in a nicer place."

Change in How They Were Viewed

Because they had left home to attend an elite college, for some lower-income participants tensions existed with people in their home communities. Some people back home now viewed them as snobs. A lower-income Black woman felt her family at times thought she was judging them negatively: "I am the first person in my family to do a lot of the stuff that I did like graduating. ... There's almost this persona that's given every time people get angry with me – that I think I'm better than them." For a lower-income White woman who returned to her home community, the judgment she experienced came not from family but "it's people I went to high school with. It's like I see them in the store and they ask me what I'm doing and I tell them and they're like, 'Oh, so are you an elitist now?' I don't think so. But there definitely is that feeling from some people."

Changes in Identity

Given their extensive and extended exposure to an elite college environment, participants changed. They had acquired new components to their personal identities that had to be reconciled with the old. This could cause internal conflict.

A lower-income White woman had married a man from a much wealthier family. She was working as a professional in a cultural institution and her husband had become a doctor. She felt she had "pole vaulted" into a much higher socio-economic class than she grew up in: "I have a lot of angst about losing my roots, my identity, betraying the ideals of things that I think are important." As she looked ahead, she knew: "It's so easy to get used to having more money. It's so easy to start to believe that you deserve x, y or z, going out to dinner, those new shoes, whatever. ... I worry that the more money we as a family even have, the less empathetic, the more out of touch, the more wasteful we have the potential to be."

Another instance of social discomfort was that of a lower-income White woman who returned to her home community, but noted: "I've changed and so I don't exactly fit in. ... I've had times where I've struggled with that and felt like I should be able to fit in with the community, or with the people who are more like the people that I grew up with better. And then more recently I felt like some of the divisions are harder to overcome."

Given the changes they had undergone, it was not uncommon for participants to experience themselves as possessing different selves that formed a whole:⁸ "Parts of me are not integrated but I think I've learned to navigate them and to understand them a little better, and to call upon them when necessary" (lower-income White woman). "I

would say I'm code switching. I switch which side of me [people] see depending on the environment" (lower-income Black woman).

For some participants, by age 30 switching which self to present came fairly naturally. Potentially contradictory selves were not experienced necessarily as the cause of internal conflict. A lower-income Black woman said, "I don't see them as one is the *true* me and the other is not the true me. I see them both as equal parts of me." Likewise, a lower-income White woman reported, "I just have different aspects of my life that I show to some people and don't show to others."

For some, switching between expressing different parts of themselves was more challenging. A lower-income Black woman said, "I just feel like I'm always having to adjust who I am to fit into the different groups that I belong to. ... At times it can just be very exhausting." A lower-income White man found himself "adapting to the environment that I'm in." He now spent most of his time with wealthy colleagues who had a very different lifestyle than he had grown up with. He had learned to converse with them about "travel and vacations and clothing and food experiences," but said, "I don't feel comfortable meeting or just doing the small chit chat with new wealthy people. I feel more comfortable where I grew up."

Difficulty Sharing New Parts of the Self

It is not uncommon for people in their 20s who are in the process of establishing their own independent identities to choose not to share certain parts of themselves and their lives with their family. This was true for participants in all four groups. Participants tended not to talk with family member about intimate relationships, e.g., "some of the issues I'm dealing with with my boyfriend," "Romantic life is kept completely away from them," "my sexuality." Some participants mentioned not sharing information about more painful issues they were dealing with so as not to upset or worry parents, e.g., mental health issues, "struggling with a lot of self-doubt," "the micro aggressions that I deal with," "a really, really bad day or something happened that made me cry in court."

Lower-income participants were reluctant to talk with parents about new parts of their lives and selves they felt family members would find difficult to understand. The inability to share new parts of themselves distanced them from their families who no longer knew them well. A lower-income Black woman found, "Most of my family, aside from maybe one or two people, really don't know me very well." A lower-income Black man working in finance left much out: "There's parts about me that my family doesn't necessarily understand." His family was unable to "relate to some of the experiences that I have had. So, some misperceptions that can occur." He now worked in a predominantly White world:

No one in my family has had this career path. It's extremely hard to talk from that perspective about my career path or what's going on at work, or things that are work related, just because there's not really any similarities in that realm. ... Maybe I wouldn't talk to some family members about specifics about my job, just because I'd rather talk to a friend who is in the same trade or whatever.

A lower-income Black woman found it hard to talk to her family about her work in fundraising in New York: "No one really knows what I mean when I say fundraising and development or operations. I have to explain what exactly that is. And I think my family probably – they're not big givers."

It was not just their love and work that might not be discussed. Many lower-income participants had acquired new tastes and interests. A lower-income White man reported, "I don't really talk to them about the things I'm interested in, like as far as art or movies or things like that, I just feel like they're not interested in the same things."

Distance could exist with siblings who had not gone on to get the same type of education. A lower-income White woman said her brother had an associate degree "but never went to school beyond that, and so we don't really have that commonality of academic experience to talk about." She now worked as a museum curator, while he worked as an auto mechanic. "It's hard for us to find common sources of conversation."

Differences in Beliefs

Over the years since graduation, participants from *all groups* had been exposed to new environments and undergone new experiences. In the process, they had continued to internalize new beliefs, attitudes, worldviews that now might differ from members of their family and others in the social world they came from. Three quarters of the participants reported they held some beliefs that differed from those of family members, i.e., parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, or grandparents.⁹ Looking more closely, however, *class differences* were present in the types of the beliefs on which participants and parents differed, and the degree of differences in their beliefs.

Lower-income participants had learned to think more critically about information than family members. That was not a divide for affluent participants, as their parents had also been to college. Lower-income participants found it distancing when parents embraced beliefs participants felt held little merit. A lower-income White woman described her mother as:

a little bit of a conspiracy nut, so she reads lots of things on the internet and wants to tell me about them. I suspect plenty of people my age have parents

who don't know how to use the internet wisely. When it seems likely to be productive, I'll try to point her in a more factual direction. But most of the time I just let it go.

She attributed her different attitudes and beliefs to “the education I had at Amherst. I want facts and evidence to back up my thoughts about things. And she's less focused on that.” A lower-income Black man who went into finance said he still shared similar values with family members, but diverged “where the news might show some story, and some of my family members might jump to a conclusion that they're pretty sure is right immediately. And based on the education that I've received, the people I've talked to, the things that I have learned, I'm able to see a wider perspective.”

The value of education and career ambition were other areas in which lower-income participants expressed greater differences in beliefs from family members than affluent participants did. For a lower-income Black woman who had attained a PhD, a rift existed with some extended family members who did not have as high a regard for education. Interestingly, it was “the younger ones, the ones who are closer in age to me, they'd rather have a job than go to school.” The mother of a lower-income White man had never attended college, and his dad had gone for a few years but never finished. His parents wanted him to go to college, but he was now much more ambitious than they were career-wise. His parents' goal had always been “more about finding happiness. ... Their attitudes have been, ‘career is secondary.’” His mom had worked the same job for 30 years: “I like to think about moving up and I like to think about management or potentially running an organization someday,” whereas his mom “does not have any interest in management.”

A third of all participants (35%) reported their political and religious beliefs differed from those of some family members,¹⁰ and class differences existed in the magnitude of these differences. Affluent participants described smaller degrees of difference in their beliefs from those of family members, and the differences they described often involved a single family member. Affluent participants often prefaced descriptions of differences in beliefs by saying things like: “I think we generally have very similar attitudes and beliefs.” Typical comments included, “I think my sister, politically she's a little bit more liberal” (affluent Black man). “The only major difference between me and my sister is that I'm religious and she's not. And my parents are also religious” (affluent White woman). An exception to restrained disagreeing was an affluent White man's succinct dismissal: “My dad voted for Trump and I cannot understand it.”

Differences in political beliefs within lower-income families were generally more profound. The views of the participants often put them on opposite sides of a spectrum, or at least at a great distance apart. Often participants' views became more “liberal” than those in their family over the years, and tensions were created due to family members'

more conservative positions. A lower-income White woman was now “much more liberal than [my family members] are. My parents are a little more reasonable but my uncle is very conservative politically.” A lower-income White woman had gotten her law degree and returned to West Virginia: “I tend to be more liberal than my brother and his family.” She attributed that to Amherst: “I went farther afield for college. So, I had a more liberal arts education and probably more diversity in the student body.”

A lower-income White woman reported, “My father is somewhat xenophobic. A while back when I was talking about pretty much supporting refugees or immigrants or something or another, and he was very wary of the idea and very concerned about people coming in and murdering Americans.” A lower-income White woman from a small, formally industrial town stated, “Some of the older generations, they are a little more, I do not want to say racist, that is not the right word, but they definitely have stronger biases that come out every once in a while, against people of other races, people of other sexual orientations.”

But that shift left was not universal. For a few lower-income participants who had become part of the establishment, a gulf had opened between them and their parents because participants now took the point of view of the people their liberal parents were fighting against. They now saw their parents’ beliefs as too idealistic. A lower-income White man disagreed with his father about “a business manager’s decision to lay people off or to reduce labor.” His father was a union worker who was “very critical and confrontational.” The participant had been an investment manager for several years and saw things from “the perspective of lenders and shareholders. I have a more nuanced view, so when it comes to those economics or business, those things we disagree on. And that also plays into politics a little bit.” A lower-income Black man who worked in investment banking said, “I consider myself a very liberal person, but I think pretty much everyone else in my family is significantly more liberal than I am. And I think it’s just a view on practicality. I think about those types of policies in terms of what can we get 51% of the country to agree to, and less about aspirational sorts of things that will never happen.” A lower-income Black woman had become a doctor: “My mom works for a non-profit and being surrounded by that, I think she’s becoming exceedingly more liberal – whereas [I’m] working in a hospital and being confronted by the actual costs of some things.”

Differences from family members in religious beliefs were mentioned almost exclusively by lower-income participants and created a strain on family relationships because their parents’ religious beliefs were deeply held and fundamental to identity. I do not know whether the families of lower-income participants may have been more religious than those of the affluent families from the start. Some lower-income participants had abandoned the religious beliefs and practices they had been raised with. The rejection of those religious beliefs was painful for some parents and created a serious

conflict with family members. The parents of a lower-income Black woman had immigrated to New York from the Caribbean. At Amherst she had embedded herself in a community of friends who were also: "Caribbean and grew up in evangelical protestant churches." She had not experienced a real struggle between two worlds around religious issues while at Amherst. She faced a very different situation at age 30: "I grew up in an evangelical church that was very anti-Catholic, and my husband is a Catholic and we go to Catholic mass. I think that was really hard for my mom in that it's not something that we talk about. ... I wish my mom would just respect my choice. But I don't think she will."

A lower-income Black woman from a Caribbean family reported similar tensions with family members over the change in her religious beliefs: "My parents are also very religious. They're Seventh Day Adventists so they go to church every Saturday for about eight hours. They're all very involved on a church board. ... It's also a very traditional church. So, one thing about religion and I think also politics I'm definitely more liberal than they are." Her parents were "judgmental, where they're always trying to get me to go to church. And my mom will be like, 'Well, are you sure you don't want to go to church, it might help you avoid Hell.' I'm like, 'Oh okay, no thank you.'"

Coping Strategies

At age 30, most of the lower-income participants had developed strategies to help manage the difficulties that had arisen in their relationships with family members. The most common approach that participants mentioned was to avoid talking about areas of difference to evade conflict. Fifty percent of the lower-income participants used this strategy compared to only 19% of the affluent participants. Lower-income participants may use this strategy more because differences in beliefs with family members were more profound and irreconcilable than they were in the families of affluent participants. Surprisingly, this strategy was used more commonly by lower-income Black (67%) than lower-income White (39%) of participants, a difference that is hard to explain.

Stress was reduced by focusing on topics that were not conflictual. The following comments were typical from lower-income Black participants: "We don't really focus on the things that are dissimilar that much. We talk about things that we have in common or things that are going on with the family or in the community or with each other's personal lives", "We don't talk about it. We talk about music and food and everything else."

A lower-income White man described his mom and younger sister as "still pretty religious. We went to Catholic schools growing up and I definitely would consider myself much more of an atheist, don't really believe in any sort of higher powers sort of thing." He avoided mentioning the changes that occurred in his views about Catholicism, but

rather chose to go “through the motions” to reduce tension with his family. He attended church with family members when he went home for Christmas and Easter. The religious beliefs of another lower-income White man differed from family members regarding “mostly evangelical Christian stuff. All of my older brothers are church-going to some extent. I have a lot of respect for them. I grew up in the church and I think it taught me some really good things as far as principles, but having broadened my perspective with Buddhism, Hinduism, I try to read a lot within the other cultures. I just think that you can augment those understandings with some other deep thinkers.” He chose not to have conversations about his new views on religion with family members.

Some lower-income White participants reported their families had never talked about their beliefs. They focused instead on common ground. A lower-income White woman noted:

My family is not really one that talks about issues or current events really. We more talk about what have you been up to lately, that kind of thing. Contrast that to my husband's family who every night at the dinner table is like debate team. So, they have a framework in their family for how to talk about stuff like that. And in my family, we really don't. So, I talk about it a little bit, but I have not made it my mission to change hearts.

Some lower-income participants had tried to discuss differences in beliefs with family members, but found it was not productive and switched to avoidance. A lower-income White woman said, “We don't really talk about [our different beliefs] as much because I honestly didn't know how much I was influencing them or not. And they weren't even interested necessarily enough to combat back.”

While the gulf between participants and their families remained great at age 30, their ability to cope with that gulf increased. As noted earlier, 55% of the lower-income participants reported struggling with bridging two different worlds. However, it was quite striking at age 30 that almost half (45%) of the lower-income participants who continued to struggle bridging two worlds also reported their relationships with family members were improving.

Over time, with increasing maturity and understanding, some participants' desire to maintain ties with families of origin had grown. A lower-income White man reported, “As I get older, as they get older, I feel more of a desire to be close to them, for them and for myself.” Participants had found ways to better manage the gulf between themselves and family members, and in some instances, parents appear to have changed as well. In the words of a lower-income White woman: “There's more understanding than there had been in the past. I think the distance and the independence has been good on both sides for all of us. We're not closer per say, but I think certainly more comfortable with one

another than we had been before.” A lower-income Black man said, “I think that we have grown to appreciate one another more. I think the level of understanding in my family has grown.”

Establishing a New Home Base

At age 30, 45% of the lower-income participants, both Black and White did not report a struggle bridging two different worlds. The majority of the participants who in 2009 at the point of graduation had reported a struggle to bridge two worlds no longer had that experience.¹¹ They had established a new home base for themselves both emotionally and physically. Since graduating from Amherst, a lower-income Black woman had lived in a city far from home where she had moved to complete her PhD. As she put it: “I’ve just chosen this life and community.” She went on to say that the people at home who were accepting of her life and her choices were “still around” in her life, and the people who were not accepting, “kind of fell by the wayside.” These participants avoided differences and sharing newer parts of themselves and their lives with family members and sought common ground instead. In some cases, the ties they maintained with family members were shallow, or in the case of one lower-income White woman, the ties were non-existent. She had dropped her old world completely, cut off ties with family members, and had developed close ties with her husband’s family.

Degree of Closeness with Family Members

Three-quarters of affluent White participants maintained close relationships with family members at age 30. Considerable continuity existed between the world affluent participants grew up in and the one they had now settled in, making it easier for this group to maintain closeness with family. A surprising finding was that only a third of the affluent Black participants described their relationships with family members as close, which is difficult to explain as none of the affluent Black participants reported a struggle bridging the two worlds of home communities and their current communities.¹² Only 45% of the lower-income participants, both Black and White, reported close relationships with family members. Given the distances between them, such closeness was difficult to achieve.

Friends from Home

Just as a gulf had arisen between lower-income participants and their parents in trying to share their current work and lives, distance existed for many participants with

their close friends from home who had not gone on to elite colleges and had not had the kinds of opportunities and experiences the participants had access to. The problem of sharing parts of oneself with friends from home was most acute for the lower-income White group. Seventy percent of lower-income White participants felt unable to share important parts of themselves in their relationships with friends from home.¹³ Only 25% of lower-income Black participants experienced this difficulty. The lower-income White participants were often the only persons from their high school class who had gone out of state to college, or who had gone to an elite college, and some of their classmates had little or no college education. A lower-income White woman described her current relationship with a close high school friend this way:

We don't really talk about our lives except for our relationships, our families, because I think that's the easiest things to cross any divide. ... Recently she's been going through a divorce and I've been giving her legal advice on that. But that's basically what it is. We don't really talk about a lot. I could tell after the election that she had voted for Trump and that was huge. That was not who I voted for. After that I was like I don't need this person in my life anymore because we are just so different. And this is everything that I hate about where I'm from. And why would I maintain my friendship with this person? ... We don't give each other emotional support, we just chat and accept that we are living probably very different lives.

For many lower-income participants it was difficult to share work lives because friends from home had little understanding of what participants were now doing, and talk about work only increased the distance between them. A lower-income White man noted, "I downplay some of the career success I've had. ... I don't want them to be jealous. I don't want them to think that I've become a big ego." A lower-income White woman found that when it came to her professional life "not all of them at least understand what I do, or why I would move around the country to so many places in order to work for a judge for one year, or go to a law firm in D.C."

Far fewer of the lower-income Black participants (25%) reported difficulty sharing parts of themselves with friends from home. Almost half of lower-income Black participants in the age 30 sample had attended private schools, and would be considered part of the privileged poor.¹⁴ Often the friends they maintained from their high schools were on a similar path in life. A lower-income Black man had gone to a private school just outside of his home community and maintained those friendships: "My high school friends I probably have a little bit more active of a relationship with just in terms of text messaging and staying in touch than I do with people who I grew up with on my block."

A lower-income Black woman noted, “The friends that I’m still friends with I selected to be friends, so we’re in the same boat in a lot of different ways. I’ve grown up in the same circumstances as one of my really good friends. The friend that I was [friends with] when I was two is actually a doctor now. ... I’m not a doctor but we can relate to each other.”

Some lower-income Black participants did find that friends from home could not understand their current life and work, and thus left out parts of themselves in those relationships. This was more often the case for the doubly disadvantaged who did not attend private schools. A lower-income Black woman said a lot of her friends could not understand her choices or aspirations:

why I decided to go to business school in the first place, just because they’re like, ‘You already have loans, why do you need to take more?’ And I’ve definitely noticed that career-wise I think they’re happier in roles that I would not be happy in. So, one of my best friends from high school, she’s an executive assistant, and that would be the kind of role that I would be working so hard to get out of. But she is really happy with it.

A lower-income Black man faced problems connecting to friends from home because he had gone to an elite liberal arts college that was

overwhelmingly majority White, and then privileged from a racial or a socioeconomic standpoint. Those are things that are [a] little difficult to talk about – mainly because there’s only one person that really has experienced it, so it’s not necessarily a two-way street. ... There’s a perception that you’re a big shot and you’re making a bunch of money and stuff like that. So, I guess those can be misunderstandings or misconceptions about me.

Therefore, much was avoided, and he and his friends focused on interests they shared: “We have so much stuff that we connect with outside of our path in life that we rarely even talk about those things.” A lower-income Black man said he could not talk easily to friends at home about his work: “I’ve had better jobs than some of them have. And that career stuff, I definitely wouldn’t have the same conversation about career and work with a couple of those friends as I would with my Amherst friends for sure.”

While many participants left out parts of themselves and their current lives when talking with friends at home, most continued to see those friends when they were home. They shared a past, understood each other’s past lives, families and communities. The following comments typify the role friends from home played in their lives now: “It’s a minimal role. I keep in touch with them. Whenever I go home I see them. I message with buddies once a quarter” (lower-income White man). “I see them whenever I go back to

New York. I see them at least a few times. Yeah, we keep up with each other sometimes by phone, a little bit sometimes by email" (lower-income White woman).

A relationship with a friend from home felt very important to a participant who now lived far from her home community. A lower-income Black woman reconnected with a high school friend who had also moved to the city in which she now resided. Even though they were not on the same career trajectory in life and "he didn't understand what I was going through," as she met the challenges of her graduate program and current academic position: "We have a really strong friendship. We've gone through a lot of life events together." Since they met up again, they had both experienced the death of a parent. "So, to have to go through major life events, it was nice to have him around."

Thirty-nine percent of affluent participants did report having a hard time in sharing parts of their lives with friends from home. In most cases the area that was left out was their work, as they felt they had taken very different career paths from friends from home. Some felt their friends could not really understand what they did: "I am the only one who is running a nonprofit, running my own job" (affluent White woman). "I leave out parts of my life that don't fit because I have such a weird employment history and just a little bit different, what an artist does and what an artist is" (affluent White woman who became a play writer). An affluent White man became an environmental writer and felt his work held little interest for his friends: "A lot of what I write about is like, 'What did the Department of Interior do last week? What's the latest planning rule for the Bureau of Land Management?' People just don't care about that stuff." For an affluent White man his career success was distancing from friends. He had just taken a job as a corporate lawyer and had a hard time talking to friends because: "We have very different career paths. I sometimes think that they perceive me as kind of a fancy lawyer who comes into town like four times a year and sees them, maybe."

Friends from Amherst

While for many participants relationships with friends from home weakened over time, at age 30 close friendships formed at Amherst were more likely to persist and retain their strength over the eight years since graduation. For the affluent Black, affluent White, and lower-income Black groups, on average 77% of the participants had retained close relationships with Amherst friends. But only 31% of the lower-income White participants had done so.¹⁵

For the three groups of participants who had maintained close ties with Amherst friends, those relationships were described using terms like "my best, my closest friends," "very supportive, helpful people in my life." The following comments were typical: "I see them pretty frequently. ... They're definitely part of my support network still" (affluent White woman). "They play a really big role. They're very supportive and they

just are people I can meet up with and vent to if I need to or just bounce ideas off of" (affluent Black woman). "A couple of them are my best friends who I talk to every day and who I go to with problems and who go to me with problems and all that stuff" (lower-income Black man).

The lower-income White group was the one exception. It is difficult to understand why only 31% of lower-income White participants versus 78% of lower-income Black participants maintained close Amherst friendships. At the end of four years at Amherst, on average Black participants reported having seven close Amherst friends, while lower-income White participants reported having six.¹⁶ At age 30, the descriptions given by many lower-income White participants of their relationships with Amherst friends depicted a lack of emotional depth and intimacy. The relationships were described with phrases such as "not too significant," "I chat with them on Facebook, occasionally over the phone. I have not seen them in person in several years now." "They are not people I see frequently. They're not people I call on the phone." "There's not an Amherst person I see regularly. There's a few who I chat with and maybe see a couple times a year. ... [I'm] not very close with any of them right now."

Discussion

The long-term impact that attendance at an elite college has on lower-income students' relationships with family and friends from home communities is an important yet understudied component of class mobility. The challenges upwardly mobile lower-income participants face maintaining relationships with people from home communities can be understood through the lens of both psychological and sociological theory.

Psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of identity development proves useful, even though he wrote little about the impact social class might have on identity development.¹⁷ Erikson held that the building blocks of identity are identifications formed in childhood. These identifications develop through the process of internalizing aspects of significant others in one's environment (i.e., parents and members of the wider family). In a working-class community, the figures for identification are quite different than they are in an affluent community in which most people are college educated and hold professional jobs. For lower-income students who attend college, exposure to this new environment provides opportunities for identification with people from more affluent class backgrounds. The people in an elite culture change students' expectations about the world and the roles they might play in it. They internalize new identity elements, which are integrated with those already present. For lower-income students, college attendance promotes changes to earlier crystallizations of identity. The final identity achieved at this stage involves altering significant identifications by selectively repudiating some, and absorbing all into a new configuration that makes a coherent whole. Erikson also argued

that identity formation is not complete until individuals gain recognition from those around them for the persons they have become. Given the changes lower-income participants have undergone, many may find it more difficult to be recognized by those left behind, i.e., known and accepted for who they now are, and need to find new people in their lives who can provide that needed recognition.

As sociologists, Elizabeth Lee and Rory Kramer have approached the challenges that socially mobile students face in maintaining ties with those left behind through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.¹⁸ Habitus is acquired unconsciously during childhood and is shaped by one's class background, but can be "endlessly transformed."¹⁹ Through exposure to more affluent people in a selective college context, habitus changes slowly, often without conscious knowledge or effort.²⁰ The original habitus of lower-income students formed in childhood remains, but the accumulation of new experiences are incorporated into it and modify it into a more elite habitus that is developed alongside.²¹ Bourdieu referred to simultaneously holding the habitus acquired during childhood and the newly acquired habitus as a *cleft habitus*.²² The changes in habitus enable upward social mobility, but create challenges for lower-income students in trying to maintain ties to people from their home communities who have not undergone the changes they have.

Identity and habitus are in many ways related though not identical constructs, but they are rarely discussed together in the academic literature. While the term "identity" has gained widespread usage, "habitus" has not. Participants framed their own struggles in terms of identity and their different self-representations, which are components of identity. Yet their description of their different selves also illustrates the concept of a cleft habitus, as one of the selves that participants described was derived from the habitus acquired during childhood and another derived from their newly acquired elite habitus. Similarly, one self was derived from identifications formed during childhood, and another self was derived from identifications formed during college and beyond.

Consistent with the tenets of both sociological and psychological theory, at age 30, 55% of lower-income participants reported a struggle bridging two different worlds – the world of home communities and their current community, something no affluent participants reported. The new elite habitus or identity elements they acquired at Amherst created distance between them and family and friends in their home communities. The continued education they may have pursued and the professional world they had entered were additionally unfamiliar to people at home, further setting these lower-income participants apart from those left behind.

The lower-income participants confronted a number of challenges in trying to bridge their two worlds. Because they had gone off to an elite college, they might now be viewed by some as snobs who thought they were better than people left behind. Some participants faced internal conflict between childhood and newer parts of self, or found

that the person they had become no longer fit in with people back at home because they had changed so much. Their increased income afforded them new lifestyles that set them apart from family members and in some cases engendered guilt that they had so much more than their families ever had. Many had a lot of difficulty sharing new parts of their lives and selves with family and old friends, especially their work, the most central component of most of their lives. Many had developed different ways of thinking and worldviews, held different beliefs from family members on politics, religion, the importance of education and career ambition, which often put them on opposite sides of a spectrum. All these factors made it more difficult for participants to fit back in at home and complicated their relationships with family and friends.

Most of the lower-income participants had developed strategies to help cope with the difficulties they faced in their relationships. Half the lower-income participants avoided talking about their differences. Choosing not to talk about their work, their new interests, lifestyles and ways of viewing the world had both costs and benefits. Being recognized as the person one has become is an important part of identity, and this was more difficult for lower-income participants to achieve. They were no longer well known by family and friends because so much of who they were and their new lives was not shared. And while that helped to reduce tensions and conflict and made relationships easier, it also reduced closeness and depth of understanding.

Over time participants matured, and became more understanding and accepting of who their parents were. Some participants and their families became more appreciative of each other, and there was a desire to hold on to family ties. Participants no longer depended on parents as the main source of their emotional support. Almost half the lower-income participants who continued to struggle bridging two worlds reported their relationships with family members were now improving. It is impossible to tell from the data, however, at what point in the eight years since graduation the struggle was greatest and when it diminished.

At age 30, 45% of the lower-income participants did not report struggling to bridge two worlds. They had established themselves in a new world, and centered themselves emotionally and physically in that world. They found ways to move between the two worlds without the same pain and conflict that they once felt, avoiding differences, sticking to common ground, and expecting less emotionally from those relationships. Less than half (46%) of lower-income participants, both Black and White reported close relationships with their families.

Questions for Future Research

A number of findings emerged from the data that are difficult to explain, and suggest important directions for future research. Both psychological and sociological

theory help to clarify why upwardly mobile students will face challenges in maintaining ties to family and friends from their non-elite home communities, challenges not faced by affluent participants. But these theories do not address the possible interaction of race and class. In previous chapters some race or class differences were found, but little evidence existed for unique outcomes due to the combined effects of race and class. The nature of the relationships that participants had at age 30 with parents, friends from home and from Amherst was in many cases different for participants of the same social class depending on whether they were Black or White.

Several interactions have been described that are hard to explain based on the data collected. At age 30, many fewer affluent Black participants (33%) had close positive relationships with parents than affluent White participants did (75%). Many more of the lower-income Black participants retained close, supportive relationships with Amherst friends (78%) than lower-income White participants did (31%), yet the two groups had graduated from Amherst with the same number of close friends. A third interaction emerged that might be easier to understand. Many more of the lower-income White participants left parts of themselves out with friends from home than lower-income Black participants did. This may be because fewer of their friends from home had completed college or attended elite colleges, but that information was not gathered in the interviews. Participants were asked about continuing relationships with Amherst friends, but were not asked about the depth and nature of new relationships they had formed since Amherst. It would be interesting to examine whether class differences or interactions between race and class exist in the depth of the new friendships that participants have formed.

Another interesting question that cannot be answered is whether the challenge of bridging the two worlds was different for the privileged poor (i.e., lower-income students of color who had scholarships to private day schools or boarding schools) and the doubly disadvantaged (i.e., lower-income students of color who attended their local public or parochial schools). The lower-income Black participants in the age 30 sample split almost evenly (5 versus 4) between the doubly disadvantaged and the privileged poor, making the sample size for these two groups too small to draw any conclusions. Nor was it possible to compare the experiences of lower-income White participants who had gone to public school with those who attended private school, as all but one participant in this group had gone to public school. We learn much from these participants about how the struggle of bridging two worlds continues into adulthood, but the data also raise many questions that can only be answered by future research with larger samples.

Notes

¹ Dews & Law (1995); Granfield (1991); Lawler (1999); Lubrano (2004); Ostrove (2003); Skeggs (1997); Stuber (2011); Tokarczyk & Fay (1993).

² Jack (2019).

³ Aries (2008). Additional reasons exist for why the lower-income White group faced more challenges on campus than the lower-income Black group. For example, Black students could more easily recognize each other, and members of the Black Student Union reached out to incoming Black students and provided connections to other Black peers and invitations to social events being held on campus.

⁴ Aries (2008).

⁵ Aries (2013).

⁶ e.g., Aries (2008; 2013); Lee & Kramer (2013).

⁷ Fifty-five percent of lower-income White ($N = 11$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 0.0% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 0.0% of affluent Black ($N = 8$) participants said they were struggling with bridging two different worlds – the world of home communities and their current life and community. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

⁸ See Harter (1999).

⁹ Seventy-seven percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 89% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 67% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 67% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) reported their beliefs now differed from those of some family members. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹⁰ Thirty-nine percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 33% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 42% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 22% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) reported their religious and political beliefs now differed from those of family members. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹¹ Sixty-three percent of the lower-income White and 50% of the lower-income Black participants who said they were struggling to bridge two worlds in 2009 said they did not experience that struggle at age 30.

¹² Forty-six percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 44% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 75% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 33% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) participants reported having close relationships with their families. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹³ Seventy percent of lower-income White ($N = 10$), 25% of lower-income Black ($N = 8$), 44% of affluent White ($N = 9$), and 33% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) participants said parts of themselves were left out with friends from home. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹⁴ Jack (2019).

¹⁵ Thirty-one percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 78% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 83% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 67% of affluent Black ($N = 9$) participants said they had maintained close friendships with friends from Amherst. A χ^2 test was not calculated because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹⁶ Aries (2013).

¹⁷ Erikson (1968).

¹⁸ Lee & Kramer (2013); Bourdieu (1977; 1990).

¹⁹ Bourdieu (1990).

²⁰ Lee & Kramer (2013).

²¹ Baxter & Britton (2001); Horvat & Davis (2011; Lee & Kramer (2013).

²² Bourdieu (2001/2004), p. 111.

9

Race, Class, and Gender in the Workplace

This chapter examines the role that race, class and gender played in participants' work lives and the barriers they experienced due to these social identities as they took their place in the adult world. While the overall focus of this longitudinal study was on race and class, in framing the study I decided it would be important to look at the effect of the glass ceiling in terms of *gender* as well as race and class. The Women's Movement in the 1960s and 1970s brought enormous changes for women in terms of entering the workforce in large numbers, but today gender inequalities in the workplace persist.¹ In their interviews, I asked participants whether they felt that they have an equal shot at promotion, or whether they thought they face a ceiling in the organization they worked for due to their race, class or gender. This was the single question that addressed the role of gender. I also asked what challenges, if any, they faced in their current job based on their race and/or class. In retrospect, I wish I had asked about difficulties the female participants faced in the workplace due to their gender as well, but some participants spoke about them without being asked.

Before immersing myself in this study, I might have begun a chapter on the workplace by saying that when the study participants graduated, they left the protected world at Amherst and moved into the "real world," where prejudice and discrimination based on social identities are woven into everyday reality. But having listened to Black participants' recollections of their lived experience on campus, it is clear that Amherst was not entirely a protected space free from racial bias and harm. Part of what Black participants learned from the predominantly White community at Amherst was about the stereotypes and prejudice White classmates held about them and people of their race, which manifested primarily in the form of numerous microaggressions. That said, the worlds many of the Black participants encountered after Amherst presented them with

much starker, more powerful instances of prejudicial behavior that went unaddressed. An affluent Black man described his transition this way:

I've never been arrested. I've never been in trouble. So, when I'm walking with my White female classmate from law school at night and a cop crosses over four lanes of traffic just to hop the curb and stare me down, what should I have done to not let that happen? And so you realize that there's nothing you can ever do to rise above racism, which is saddening and frustrating and upsetting. At Amherst you're in a nice little bubble. ... If there's an incident of alleged racism at Amherst, it's limited to Amherst and you figure it out as a community. But now it's real life and [you] see how things affect you, if not individually, but the community as a whole. And it can be disheartening and upsetting.

The chapter focuses on the challenges that participants faced in the workplace, the skills and abilities participants had internalized that helped them negotiate these challenges, and in the case of Black participants, the messages they wanted to pass on to their children to enable them to succeed. The problems participants faced due to race, class and gender will be taken up in turn.

The Challenges of Race in the Workplace

Racial stereotypes are ubiquitous and strongly socialized in our society.² The unintentional internalization of societal stereotypes, i.e., of inaccurate depictions of people of color, begins early in life and becomes deeply ingrained, leading to prejudiced perceptions of and responses to individuals. Early socialization of children creates both implicit and explicit pro-White/anti-Black bias. While individuals might later learn it is not socially acceptable to demonstrate this explicit bias, the implicit bias remains.³

Black Participants

The workplace can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger society. The racial stereotypes and biases people have internalized growing up play out in everyday interactions with co-workers. Some workplace discrimination can take overt forms, such as a fully qualified person being passed over for a promotion due to race. But workplace discrimination more commonly takes subtle forms such as racial microaggressions, which are derogatory racial slights and insults directed at people of color that wittingly or unwittingly hurt, demean, exclude, or negate a person's reality. As more people of color are hired and promoted in the workplace to achieve equity, some White co-workers

view them skeptically, assuming they are less competent and have been granted an unmerited advantage. These racial attitudes can be expressed in subtle ways that have a detrimental impact on Black co-workers.

Not surprisingly, Black study participants were much more likely to report facing challenges at their current jobs due to their race than White participants (71% versus 25%).⁴ All but one of the White participants who reported racial challenges in the workplace worked with predominantly non-White populations. In these cases, the challenges they faced came from clients and not from co-workers.

A lower-income Black man worked for a prestigious investment bank where he encountered the implicit bias that Black people are less qualified than White people:

You're not going to face outright racism in a place like [this investment bank]. I think it's hidden biases types of things. If you come in as a White male or an Asian male, people will expect that you can do certain things a little bit better than they might if you come in as a Black male, notwithstanding the fact that everybody has gone through the same interview process and rigorous vetting to get in the door. There are certainly series of trainings that happen at these firms where they try to highlight these hidden biases in good people to the broader manager population. But I definitely think [the hidden biases are] there. And I think it plays out.

An affluent Black man who had gone on for a PhD and became a military historian found himself in an almost entirely white field: "When I went to conferences or I went to do research at archives or whatnot, it's not a very diverse field and I felt that I had to do more to prove myself than other folks to get accepted as a scholar and a peer. ... It's a glance here, a sneer there." Another affluent Black man felt, "Some people just don't take you quite as seriously as they might. There are maybe some particular relationships that I've had where I feel like I've had to work harder to explain myself or to be taken seriously, relative to some colleagues who aren't a six-foot Black man."

This type of prejudice was certainly not new to participants. Throughout their lives they had encountered the negative stereotypes that Black people are less intelligent, capable or qualified than White people. How, then, to counter the stereotypes? Many of the Black participants spoke of ways they had learned to negotiate this barrier to their success. From an affluent Black man's perspective as a Black person he had learned you must never be "unprepared because people will use your race as an excuse ... as a hook to say, 'Oh, he or she is not good enough.'"

For many Black participants, the message they had been raised with to cope with racial stereotypes was not just be prepared but be *the best*. This required working longer

and harder than White classmates or colleagues. To be the best meant not just meeting expectations, but exceeding them. In the words of an affluent Black man:

I was always taught that as a Black person I always needed to go above and beyond what my White peers would do. [Black people] always need to be better. And that was a message that was ingrained in me from very early on. And in some ways, you could say that could be a burden. I don't know if I think of it that way but I never try to have bad days because I don't want anyone to ever be able to use that as a way to justify their subconscious biases towards Black people. So, I always try to be above and beyond what somebody might do.

An affluent Black woman put it this way: “just being good enough with who you are” is not enough. “In order to be successful, you have to be the best. You can't just be mediocre because people expect you *not* to be good at all.”

Because White people are more likely to hold power and authority in work settings, outcomes for Black people often depend on pleasing White people. Black employees must be vigilant about the way they present themselves in speech, dress, hair, and demeanor if they want to succeed. To combat stigma, they must consider, for example, what the costs might be to having dreadlocks; not dressing in business casual; or to exposing possible tattoos. They must be careful not to be seen as too loud or too aggressive. To gain respect in a predominantly white workplace, Black people face pressure to present themselves in the same manner that the upper-middle-class White people around them do.⁵

Participants continuously monitored themselves through a double consciousness, how they saw themselves and that second level of awareness that W. E. B DuBois described – “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.”⁶ A lower-income Black woman described her discomfort around White people this way: “I don't know how they feel about me just by seeing them. It's always like playing the lottery. Are they going to be open to me being around or not?” Many participants felt they had to withhold aspects of their identity and be Black in “the right way” to protect themselves. The specifics were not always spelled out. A lower-income Black man spoke of his experiences at one of the top investment banks. He was highly conscious of his race and how he must best present himself:

I work in a bank that's overwhelmingly white. I have always worked in a position that's been overwhelmingly white. I've always worked on a team or for a company that's been overwhelmingly white. I'm very aware that I'm Black, and in most cases I'm the only Black person. Whether that's on my team or whether that's at social events or whatever it is, work related, I

would say my race plays a very large role – whether it's how I present myself or how I come off, how I dress.

Presenting themselves in a manner acceptable to White people could pose an additional challenge – how to do that while still remaining true to themselves. Adapting could mean giving up parts of oneself. A lower-income Black man said: “As I've gotten older I've become more comfortable in just being myself, and I guess being ‘unapologetically Black,’ if you want to use one of the catch phrases that's out there now. But at the same time, there are times where you have to temper things just to be sure that you're not perceived differently than how you intend to be.”⁷ A lower-income Black woman who had worked for NASA described the challenge she faced in trying to overcome racial biases while remaining true to herself. She felt people made assumptions about her based on both her race and gender: “You have to combat those stereotypes while having to remain true to who you are.”

Racial bias is often expressed in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions cause stress and feelings of isolation and invalidation in those targeted. The accumulation of everyday discrimination has been found to be quite damaging to mental health, increasing levels of anxiety and depression, and lowering self-esteem.⁸ It is also detrimental to physical health, producing negative cardiovascular outcomes.⁹ Some Black participants described being the target of racial microaggressions at work. A lower-income Black woman doing a post-doc was the only African American in her department. She felt, “I'm alone but in the spotlight.” She experienced microaggressions that “come at you unexpectedly and are demeaning.” She went on to say:

People make comments. I don't think they're trying to be hurtful but [the comments] do sting every once in a while. And so then trying to not internalize those comments is difficult for me. ... I feel like there's a little bit more negativity towards me in general just because there's the, ‘Oh you're a Black woman so you should be able to get a job really easy.’ And then there's the ones who are like ‘Oh, she's not that qualified; it's just because she's a Black woman.’

A number of Black participants felt the burden of being seen as a representative of their race in the workplace, something they had experienced at Amherst as well.¹⁰ They believed any mistakes or failures on their part reflected not just on them as individuals, but on Black people more generally. Their mistakes would reinforce stereotypes of Black people as less competent, intelligent and qualified, whereas for White people, their errors reflect on them as individuals, not on their race. As a lower-income Black man put it, “I do have to take an extra step a lot of times being the only Black person or being one of

very few. You're a representative of Black people, so you're always conscious of how you come off."

Being a representative of her race carried a different type of pressure for an affluent Black woman in her role as a curator in an art museum. As the only Black person in her work setting, she felt she bore the responsibility for ensuring that work by people of color would be shown in the museum: "I think nobody wants to be the token of diversity at the place they work. It's simultaneously a privilege to be a young Black woman curating the show of another Black woman. But there's also the burden of oh, if there's going to be any diversity brought into this place, it's all up on my shoulders."

Being the only Black person in their work setting made fitting in with work colleagues more difficult, leaving some Black participants with a sense of isolation. An affluent Black woman who was the only person of color at her work reflected, "Sometimes I feel a little bit alone or that I might view things or understand things a little bit differently than my coworkers. [That] isolates me in some ways from my coworkers in feeling that maybe I am having a different experience because of that." Her message is poignant, though it lacks specifics. Another affluent Black woman, also the only Black person in her work setting, would ask colleagues "what they're doing over the weekend and what they did over the weekend, but they won't ask me. It's feelings of exclusion so to speak, just not being part of the conversation or invited to be part of the conversation."

One lower-income Black woman was not aware of racial bias from her clients because she worked remotely and transacted business by phone. All went well for her until a moment came when she had to meet face-to-face with some of her clients. She and her colleagues flew to a workshop that they were running: "I gave a presentation and you could tell that when people met me that they were not expecting for me to be Black, which was very interesting. So, it's more about perception. And now I'm not sure what that means moving forward, or how that will affect how they view me." She did not share specifics on the tone of the facial or verbal expressions she picked up on, but this quote provides another example of the painful double consciousness Black people have to live with.

Career Ceilings

Almost half (47%) of the Black participants felt they faced a career ceiling due to their race. No White participants reported having that feeling.¹¹ In discussing chances for advancement, some Black participants were clear that in order for them to be promoted, they would have to attain a higher standard than a White person. A lower-income Black man who worked for a prestigious investment bank reported, "It's harder as a person of color to advance. And I think the firm is aware of that. And obviously the numbers tell that story. ... As you think through the partnership culture, I think there are six Black partners across the entire firm versus upwards of probably say 2,000 total partners. And

that gives you a sense of what it looks like on a racial basis. ... As a person of color, you typically have to perform at a higher level to receive an equal amount of recognition and compensation.” An affluent Black man who worked for a law firm believed there was a “ceiling to a certain extent being that if a Black male were named a partner the year before I were up for partner, I would think that that decreases the chances of me becoming partner. I don't think it would be explicit, but I think yeah, if a Black male were appointed partner right before me, it would make my chances somewhat more difficult.”

Other Black participants voiced doubts that they had an equal shot at promotion when they observed who held the top positions in the organizations they worked for. An affluent Black man noted, “As I move through my career and move upwards, you see less and less people around you who look like you. And that shines a spotlight on the perceived barriers and real barriers as well as an institutionalized system that doesn't benefit people who look like me.” A lower-income Black woman in the first year of her medical residency noted,

I look at the people who are administrators or had important roles in the hospital, or even were just attending physicians, there're not very many attending physicians from underrepresented groups in medicine. ... It's a stark, stark comparison between the levels of the hospital hierarchy in terms of race. There are almost zero attendings and department heads of any underrepresented group of minorities. There're zero Hispanics, so if you're Hispanic you're not looking for anybody who looks like you. I just found out the head of cardiology is Black and I was befuddled. I've probably seen one Black attending actually on the floors. But then residents, there's very few, but maybe a couple more. But then the nurses, there's maybe a couple Black nurses. And then by the time you get to techs, what used to be nurse's aides (but now we have all these fancy terms that only muddy what these people do), you get a little bit more people of color, like the techs. And then cleaning staff is almost exclusively Black and some Hispanics. I don't think I've seen one White member of the cleaning staff. And then the people who bring trays, they're almost exclusively Black. So, when you come to the hospital it's not like you don't see any Black people. It's just that there are almost no Black people in the skilled workforce.

Participants who were both Black and female faced greater bias due to their race and gender. A lower-income Black woman noted, “In my current job I think it's very clear that if you're a minority of color who's not a man, it's very hard to progress within the company past intern level. I actually don't know of any people of color past the associate level.” Another lower-income Black woman was doing a post doc in an academic field where women and minorities were underrepresented. Looking to the

future, she worried about getting an academic job: "I want to become a professor and this is a great stepping stone towards that because I was given the opportunity to teach. But I do think that my journey is going to be difficult because of my race and gender in terms of finding a job."

Participants had been able to succeed to this point despite facing racial biases, and while seeing the obstacles they faced to gain promotion, most had remained hopeful about their future. A lower-income Black man said, "I certainly don't feel like I have an equal shot at promotions. I feel like I've got to work harder in every case, something I've been doing basically all my life." But things had worked out so far, and he expressed optimism. In contrast to his first response that he "certainly" didn't have an equal shot at promotion, he went on to say, "I feel like all things are possible and it may be harder in that I may have to work a bit harder, but I don't think that there's a ceiling, or I haven't experienced that feeling yet."

Some of the challenges Black participants spoke about were unique to the fields they were in. For example, an affluent Black woman was trying to make it as an actress. She was the only Black member of her theater company. Because she was a Black person, she recognized that most roles out there were roles she would "never be able to play." The upcoming season for her theatre company included only a single role for a Black person and that role was for a Black man: "I found that out and I cried for a really long time because this is the theater company that I work with. And how am I supposed to find work?"

Socializing Children to Cope with Race and Racism

Black participants wanted to teach their children that they would grow up in a racist society, and to understand the impact that would have on them. An affluent Black man said:

I'll tell them racism exists. It always will. It's just something that's going to be in the background of your life, something you're going to have to deal with, maybe not exactly every day, more or less every day. ... You're going to have to deal with people crossing to the other side of the street when you walk by. You're going to have to deal with getting followed in convenience stores. You're going to have to deal with people assuming that you're not as competent with school work or employment or whatnot. It's just going to be the background of your life.

In line with this view, other Black participants' messages were: "You're Black; don't forget it. That's how everyone sees you" (affluent Black man). "As a Black person in America that's something that you don't have the privilege of being ignorant about. I would

definitely want them to be very educated and have them understand how their race lets them be perceived by others, and how it could affect their lives moving forward" (lower-income Black woman). Given the prevalence of police violence, some participants wanted to be sure their children knew how to stay safe when approached by the police. An affluent Black man would, "tell them you will be treated unfairly by the police because it is inevitable if you are a person of color, no matter what you've done." He wanted to teach his children that if a police officer told them what to do, "You *do* it, even if you feel like you are in the right in what you're doing, and you were being fully wronged."

A delicate balance existed for participants between wanting their children to be aware of the racism they would face, and not wanting them to feel held back by racial stereotypes. An affluent Black man wanted his children "to know the entire scope of their position in the society. But it has to be in a way where they're not afraid and they're able to treat situations as if they were accepted." Similar responses came from other Black participants: "Racism is so very much alive that people will prejudge you based on your race. You can't let those determinations or perceptions discourage you or influence you" (affluent Black man). "I would want them to not let race define everything that they do, but to not be woefully ignorant of racial issues going on" (affluent Black woman).

Black participants wanted to teach their children how cope with the racism they would face in society. They would pass on to their children messages they had received from their own parents growing up: "work harder" (affluent Black man), "in order to be successful you have to be the best," (affluent Black woman), "don't ever be unprepared" (affluent Black man), "keep your head down, stay focused." (lower-income Black woman).

Several Black women sounded a more optimistic note than some of the Black men did about their children being able to overcome the obstacles they would face. A lower-income Black woman wanted her children to know that racism exists, "but it is only as powerful as they let it be. It might impact their lives in ways, but push it out of your mind." Another lower-income Black woman would tell her children: "People are going to think about you what they want to think about you. And that's their issue." She wanted her kids to know: "What you ultimately accomplish is up to you and you alone. ... Whether or not you will succeed depends on one thing, and that's perseverance. ... Whether or not you get to the finish line depends on how determined you are to get there." With a belief in what might be possible for her children, a lower-income Black woman said, "I want them to reach for the ceiling. I know that I've done a lot thus far and so I just want the trajectory to continue."

White Participants

Twenty-five percent of White participants did talk about challenges they faced at work because of their race. All but one of these participants worked with non-White

populations. None of them reported facing racial barriers to promotion. Their experiences echo one of the themes that Black participants talked about – overcoming racial bias to build credibility. Two affluent White women, one a social worker and the other a public defender, faced similar difficulties working with clients who were predominantly Black. They found being White was an obstacle to building relationships with their clients. The social worker said, “I feel like I have to work a little bit harder to let them know that I’m on their side and I’m really there to meet them where they’re at.” The public defender said:

I get what the problem is. They have this random White person who's not from New Orleans who comes to visit them in jail. I've never been arrested and I'm trying to understand what it's like to be racially profiled or to be in a situation where the judge looks at you different. ... I come from a very different background and I think it takes a lot more to earn credibility with them and earn trust with them. My coworker, who is Black and did grow up in New Orleans, I've seen her speaking with clients. Just more immediately they have the same references and they know that she'll have more understanding of what they've dealt with on a daily basis than I will.

A lower-income White man who became a physician faced difficulties at times dealing with African American and Hispanic patients: “Sometimes your patients, they're in the emergency department, they're hurt, they're unhappy, their scared. And sometimes if they feel they're not getting the care they deserve; they will bring up that they feel it's because their race is an issue.”

The nature of the racial challenge brought up by an affluent White man took a different form. He was not concerned with overcoming the racial bias of others in building credibility, but rather with overcoming his own racial bias. He was an environmental writer and worried about a different form of racial bias – who his sources were: “I often catch myself writing stories in which every single person quoted is a White man. And I know that there are lots of important perspectives that I’m missing. And there are often stories that I’m not doing because they just don't occur to me because of my perspective. So, one thing I’ve been trying to do as a reporter is to just diversify who I’m talking to and who I’m quoting in my pieces.”

The Challenges of Social Class in the Workplace

The affluent participants were likely to come to Amherst already equipped with cultural knowledge, skills and abilities that would help them succeed in the professional

world. An affluent White woman from a wealthy family took an initial a job at a hedge fund. She reflected:

I always knew how to treat rich people. And I think that that's something that you have to learn. ... I knew how to make those people comfortable. And I think that helped with so many of my jobs ... knowing that I could fit into a performance that people wanted me to fit into.

For lower-income participants, as discussed in Chapter 5, four years at an elite residential college enabled them to acquire the kinds of skills and knowledge possessed by their affluent classmates, skills and knowledge that would help them succeed in a wealthier world. Many had adopted new forms of dress, speech, tastes and preferences. Race is easily discernable – not so for social class of origin. Over two-thirds (69%) of the participants reported facing no career challenges due to social class.¹²

Some lower-income participants described their ability to fit into the more affluent world they were now working in. A lower-income White woman who had become a lawyer said:

I'm very fortunate in that when you look at me you don't necessarily know where I came from. I don't have an accent. For the most part if you saw my resume you could easily think I grew up in Connecticut. And I think a lot of my clients do. So, on some level I feel much the way I did in college, which is as long as I didn't bring up my background, no one had any idea.

A lower-income Black woman worked with

a lot of very, very wealthy people and I have to build relationships with those people. I feel that there are some differences there. But I do think that my experience at Amherst has helped me to be able to navigate relationships with people of different social classes, especially with people of higher social classes, because that was a lot of my experience at Amherst. A lot of my close friends were people who were from higher classes.

Class challenges were reported with the greatest frequency by lower-income Black participants (56%). Though they framed the challenges they faced in terms of social class, in some cases it is possible that race may have played a role as well. A lower-income Black man teaching 6th grade at an independent school spoke of the implicit class bias he experienced in his work setting. The populations he worked with were in a higher class than he identified with, and he felt he had to prove his worth: "It's a challenge to show my worth or have others recognize my worth." A lower-income Black man in the field of

finance felt he had not gained knowledge of the field growing up as many of his wealthier colleagues had: "I was in a wealth-management industry. I was lower-middle class growing up, and I didn't grow up with my mom talking to me about her portfolio and stuff like that so I got some job specific skills. I maybe had to learn more than somebody who had grown up upper class and thinking about money and stocks and stuff like that all the time."

The class challenge that participants talked about most frequently involved the distance they felt around *colleagues* from affluent backgrounds. A lower-income Black woman doing her residency said:

In medical school, and even now, I'm just astounded by how many people are just generational doctors. Your experience of being a resident and trying to make your salary stretch in terms of living on it and paying back your loan debt is just not other people's experience. It makes it hard to have anything in common with them when their parents are paying for their entire life and they're in their 30's.

One lower-income White man who went into finance faced difficulty being included because of his class background. Some of the younger associates at work came from wealthy families and they had:

more comfort engaging with and shared hobbies with the wealthier people with whom I work and associate. Another part of my job is to interview management teams and CEO's of companies, generally people that have a lot of wealth. And I occasionally find that their lifestyles and hobbies are not something that I can relate to.

Another lower-income White man in finance noted that most of the people he worked with are "going to their family's Hampton house on the weekends, and a lot of them are going to meet up in the Hamptons. I'm not going to my family's Hampton house on the weekends. But I think that that kind of stuff matters, but those are not the only social opportunities." Not sharing colleagues' lifestyles meant exclusion from weekend activities and thus opportunities for conversations where information might be shared regarding work that could be advantageous.

From the other end of the class spectrum, some affluent participants faced the challenge of not fitting in with work colleagues because their class background was higher than the people they worked with. They felt the need to hide that part of their identities and avoid the topic of class to prevent others and themselves from being uncomfortable. An affluent White woman who worked with poor clients noted, "Coming from middle to upper middle class, it's not something I would ever talk to my clients

about just because they don't come from that socioeconomic class. And so I feel like that would create a barrier." An affluent Black woman said that: "As I've gotten older I actually have become more and more aware of how privileged my upbringing was. So I would say my biggest challenges are the fact that I really feel maybe most fulfilled and enjoy working with people on a very different socioeconomic class than me, and sometimes I have to remind myself that my experiences were very different from theirs."

The Challenges of Gender in the Workplace

I asked participants about whether they faced a ceiling due to gender in the organization that they worked for and whether they felt they had an equal shot at a promotion. I did not ask specifically about what gender challenges they faced, though some participants brought up experiences with gender bias. Thirty-five percent of the women said they faced a ceiling due to their gender, and an equal percentage also spoke of other types of gender challenges they faced in their workplaces. No male participant reported that being a man would be a problem when it came to promotion, or that they had experienced challenges due to their gender.¹³

The majority of participants, both male and female, were aware of gender inequalities in their workplaces. These inequalities were made obvious by observing who filled the highest positions in the professions and organizations in which they worked – men. Some male participants said being a man gave them an advantage when it came to promotion. Such observations included: "The upper, upper management is almost exclusively male" (lower-income White man). "There's five female partners and there's 175 male partners. ... I feel like I have a pretty significant advantage" (affluent White man). "Only 15% of orthopedic surgeons are women. ... My program has 20 residents, and all 20 of them are males. Last year we had one resident who graduated who was a female, and then next year we'll have one, but I mean it's still one out of 20" (lower-income man).

Some women participants made similar observations regarding the gender structure in their workplace and concluded they did face a ceiling. An affluent White woman with a PhD in science was aware of the ceiling due to gender:

Certainly, seeing the number of women in the highest positions, it's certainly fewer women than men by a pretty great deal – people in professorship positions and deans at the university and things like that. So, at my current level I'd say it's pretty even, but at the next level it definitely seems like there's a bottleneck or a hiring bias or what, but certainly there is gender inequality at that next level.

According to an affluent Black woman who worked in advertising sales:

It's definitely still a boy's club. Essentially in our business a lot of the success is based on experience, just building relationships with people over the years. And I have a colleague, a female, who's been in the business for a long time and she does very well for herself, but she still doesn't get some of the opportunities that [her male] counterparts get. She's not in the boy's club. So, it's still heavily male dominated. ... If you look from a gender standpoint, you look at the women in our group and the men in our group, I mean the men make significantly more money.

Female participants spoke about a variety of challenges they or their female friends faced in the workplace because of their gender: being paid less for the same work, sexual harassment, exclusion, microaggressions. A lower-income Black woman had worked at a high school where she was one of very few Black teachers. The administrative positions and opportunities for advancement went to men. The men were paid more than the women for doing the same job. Sometimes the men were paid more than women even though the women had higher positions than the men did: "I would say that definitely being a female was a barrier in that case. I don't think that it was so much me being Black that was a barrier. It was more me being a female."

A lower-income White woman in science was clear about gender bias: "There definitely are biases against women. They're not often spoken about, and a lot of people don't realize they have them. ... There definitely were feelings of women colleagues not necessarily being as good as male colleagues." A lower-income Black woman doing her residency complained that patients tended to assume she was *not* a doctor: "Just going into the patient's room, 50% of the patients are like, 'Oh, the nurse is here.' I'm not dressed in scrubs. I'm wearing a white coat. My white coat says doctor. My ID says doctor. 'You've seen your nurse and that's not me.'" An affluent White woman working as a TV writer described the sexism she observed in the writer's room: "I had to bite my tongue when my boss started complaining about how women wear booty shorts and that should be illegal. ... One of the women who is very high up ... is responded to differently [than men]." That participant had heard "horror stories" from friends "about the things that their bosses do to them in terms of gender, and for some of them race and class. I can still feel that [gender is] just a harder ceiling to break [than race and class]."

A lower-income White woman worked for a small law firm with seven lawyers, most of whom were White men. She found, "The gender part of it is actually something that's become a huge part of my daily life." She would regularly sit in meetings with ten men "where I'm the only woman. And navigating that sexism in the legal world has been a new challenge." As an example, another lawyer in the firm would not respond to her, but "he'll respond to my boss, even though I'm the attorney on the case. ... So, I deal with

those kinds of things every day. ... By the time you layer on every little thing, it's the microaggressions and that kind of stuff, where it feels like even if you could [point them out], what's the point?" This woman had started working at age 12 doing different manual labor jobs and had not felt her gender posed a problem. She found at those jobs,

If you could do the job you were part of the team. And now I see the White male circle of power. And if you aren't one of those people, whether it's because of your race or gender, and even more strongly gender I would say, that you're probably going to be on the outside for a while. ... As long as you're a man it's fine. But if you are a woman of color, you're going to be facing even worse stereotyping than I think as a White woman I would feel. ... The gender issues that I talked about with work, that's something that makes me feel more defeated. Class was always something I felt like I could push through, but there's nothing that I can do to push through my gender. And so, it's a challenge that I haven't really had to face before. And the idea of having to continue tackling it for the next however many, 40 plus years of professional life, it's intimidating.

Being Black *and* female increased the challenges that Black women faced at work. A lower-income Black woman who worked in fundraising and development found the gender and race challenges to be greater than class challenges: "That part of my job where I'm fundraising in development and building relationships with donors is probably the most affected by my gender." She noted that while she was at Amherst she had faced many challenges due to her social class, but class was no longer so salient in her life. Now in the work world: "I think about class, but what I think about more is gender and race."

An affluent Black woman said she outworked other employees, but faced challenges due to both gender and race, challenges she could not overcome. She felt doubly disadvantaged by being both female and Black, but the challenge of race seemed greater than that of gender: "I get there early, I stay late. I think outside of the box. I work extremely hard and I don't see results. And I think the nature of the business I'm in, where it is still male dominated. ... I am the only African American in the field. You notice a difference in how people treat you." Observing her male colleagues, she noted:

They get along, they hang out, they drink beers, they watch sports. And it's not reciprocated with me. Similarly, I have a colleague who's tall and blonde, and we've both walked into rooms at times and we get two different reactions. So not that I didn't expect it, but I accept it as the nature of the world we live in today. And that's how things are. But I'm determined to do well in my job despite those things that are out of my control.

A lower-income Black woman took a job at NASA where most of the higher administrators were White men. She felt, "I go in with three strikes against me: I'm Black, I'm a female, and I did come from a low-class background. ... The first time that they offered me the position for NASA, they tried to low ball me by \$30,000." The negotiations over salary went on for several weeks. She consulted older women friends about how to negotiate and was advised to say:

'I talked with my husband about [the salary offer] and my husband has some concerns.' So even when I was negotiating with them, I'd have to come from the perspective of I'm speaking for this male, which in my head I'm like 'Why do I have to do that? Why do I have to talk to you about what my husband [thinks]? My husband has nothing to do with our negotiation.' I think in other positions that I've held definitely I would say being female has been more of a deterrent than being Black.

She also spoke about how gender and race played out on a daily basis. She felt she had to take "a softer approach." She felt that being a Black woman: "I have to be prepared to work twice, sometimes three times as hard to get the same level of acknowledgment that might come easier to somebody else."

Because of the gender biases they faced in the workplace, some of the female participants realized how important it would be for them to serve as role models for the young women who would follow them, and to open up opportunities for their success. An affluent Black woman working in advertising sales found her position fraught with challenge:

I need to struggle through it so that perhaps those that come after me won't have to. So, I continue to do what I do because of who I am as an African American female. I look at myself as trying to pave the way for other African Americans, other females, other minorities in general. So, it shapes who I am as a person in a lot of what I do.

She was not alone in working to help improve the status of women. A lower-income White woman in science said, "I'm involved in Women in Science efficacy groups that extends to talking to current undergrads and high school students about careers in science, and specifically challenges they might face because they're a woman in science." An affluent White woman on a post-doc in science was working with a women's group at her university to plan events and hoped through "planning these events to promote women's issues."

Discussion

Members of disadvantaged groups cope daily with inequalities. As a lower-income Black male participant put it, “I face challenges every day by being a Black man in America. I don’t think it’s any different at my job [than outside of work]. ... I’m aware of [my race] every day.” Seventy-one percent of Black participants reported facing racial challenges at work. Racism in the workplace operates at both the systemic and individual level. When Black participants looked systemically at who filled the senior positions in the organizations in which they worked, they saw White men. Historically Black people have been held back by a glass ceiling that effectively eliminated people of color from the top of the power hierarchy. Almost half the Black participants (47%) reported facing a career ceiling due to race, while no White participants perceived such a job ceiling. On the individual level, many Black participants reported having to deal with racial stereotypes, bias, microaggressions and exclusion in their work environments. They carried the burden of being viewed as representatives of their race, rather than as just individuals, as their errors would reflect on all Black people, not just on themselves as they do for White people. Because the positions of power were held by White people, Black participants had to adjust their behavior to please those who controlled their work world. This meant assimilating to White standards. To fit in could entail hiding parts of themselves, making it difficult to feel fully true to themselves. The cumulative effects of dealing daily with these many challenges should not be underestimated. They are physically and psychologically taxing, and take a toll on mental and physical health.

In the face of these challenges, many Black participants reported having acquired the knowledge and skills over the course of their lives to help enable them to cope with racism and the obstacles it posed. Much of their learning was acquired at home, as well as at Amherst. Looking beyond this study to the findings of other scholars, the research literature shows that to prepare their children for racial prejudice and discrimination, Black parents talk with their children about discrimination, caution their children about barriers to success, and stress the development of skills and characteristics that will enable their children to succeed in the dominant culture.¹⁴ Black parents may instill *aspirational capital*, i.e., the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, as well as *resistant capital*, i.e. knowledge and skill to challenge inequality.¹⁵ These forms of capital prove useful in overcoming barriers to achievement.

Participants were never asked in the interviews about their own racial socialization, only about the messages they would give to their children about race. But in talking about the challenges they faced in the work world, many Black participants brought up their own racial socialization – the messages they received about racial prejudice and discrimination and how to cope with racism and achieve success. Black study participants’ reports about their own socialization are consistent with the research

literature. They were taught that they must work longer and harder than White peers or co-workers, go above and beyond expectations, and be exceptional to achieve the same success. Being outstanding and outworking others was a heavy burden to have to carry. In turn, participants planned to educate their children to understand that they would face racism in society – that they would be racially profiled, viewed through the lens of negative stereotypes. The participants had suggestions for how their children should cope with and not be held back by racism.

In contrast to race, social class posed fewer challenges for participants in the work world. This was largely because social class is more easily hidden from view, and the participants had learned skills at Amherst to enable them to succeed in a predominantly affluent White world. Only a third of participants felt social class was a barrier to promotion. Lower-income Black participants were most likely to report class challenges, but in some cases challenges they attributed to their class position likely pertained to their race as well.

Thirty-five percent of the female participants and no male participants reported facing a career ceiling due to their gender, and Black women felt doubly disadvantaged. Like the Black participants, women saw the positions at the top of the hierarchy in their organizations filled by White men. They felt they had to work longer and harder to overcome implicit gender bias to succeed. Some women participants were paid less than male colleagues, some were the targets of gender microaggressions. It was notable that some women experienced the gender challenges to be greater than the race or class challenges they had faced in their lives.

Despite the challenges or barriers participants faced at work due to their race, class or gender, when asked, “How optimistic do you feel about the future for yourself?” all expressed optimism. Three quarters (74%) of the participants gave an unqualified response about feeling optimistic, the rest were “mostly” or “fairly” optimistic.”¹⁶ The reasons for qualifying their optimism varied, but race, class and gender discrimination in the workplace were not on their lists

Notes

¹ See Abadi (2018, August 13); Catalyst (2017, January 19); U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018, August).

² Fiske (1998).

³ Baron & Banaji (2006).

⁴ Fifteen percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 67% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 25% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 75% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) reported facing challenges due to race. A χ^2 test was not computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

⁵ See <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/being-black-work/409990/> (accessed May 18, 2020); <https://aaattorneynetwork.com/is-job-dress-code-racist/> (accessed May 18, 2020);

http://www.collegiatetimes.com/opinion/stigma-around-tattoos-in-professional-world-a-form-of-workplace/article_9beb4aac-4f25-11e8-9258-936dc3e3d38b.html (accessed May 18, 2020); <https://mashable.com/2015/08/08/black-men-dressing-up-police/> (accessed May 18, 2020).

⁶ Du Bois (1903/1993), p. 9.

⁷ To be “unapologetically Black” means not investing energy in worrying about and being afraid of what White people might think, not trying to put White people at ease, and rather taking pride in one’s blackness. See <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/21/us/beyonce-lamar-unapologetically-black/index.html> (accessed May 18, 2020).

⁸ Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer (2006); Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit, & Rasmus (2014); Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken (2013); Oluo (2018); Sue (2010).

⁹ Tomfour, Cooper, Mills, Nelesen, & Dimsdale (2010).

¹⁰ Aries (2008; 2013).

¹¹ Zero percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 57% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 0.0% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 38% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) reported facing a career ceiling due to their race. A χ^2 test was not computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹² Thirty-one percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 56% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 25% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 13% of affluent Black participants ($N = 8$) reported facing challenges due to social class. A χ^2 test was not computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

¹³ Thirty-five percent of women ($N = 20$), and no men ($N = 19$) reported facing a ceiling due to gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 39) = 5.9, p = .015$.

¹⁴ Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer (2006).

¹⁵ Yosso (2005).

¹⁶ Fifty-four percent of lower-income White ($N = 13$), 89% of lower-income Black ($N = 9$), 83% of affluent White ($N = 12$), and 78% of affluent Black participants ($N = 9$) reported feeling optimistic about the future. A χ^2 test was not computed because four cells had expected counts less than five.

10

Next steps

At the start of this study in 2005, Amherst College had begun to greatly increase opportunities for lower-income and racial minority students to attend the college. The college's goals were both to promote social mobility and equity, and to enhance the learning environment for all students by enabling them to interact with classmates whose social identities, life experiences and perspectives might be very different than their own. The college dedicated great energy and resources to achieving this aim, with a great deal of success.

The earlier phases of my research showed that the lower-income and Black study participants who entered the college in 2005 faced many challenges on campus both academically and socially. At that time, fewer resources existed to help create an inclusive community in which they might thrive, and to enable them to succeed. However, with the resources available, and the strengths these participants possessed that had gotten them to Amherst – some combination of their talent, high achievement motivation, work ethic, passion, and perseverance – they were able to persist, to learn, to grow, to acquire new skills and knowledge that would serve them well post-graduation. All but two of 58 original participants graduated from the college.

Promoting Social Mobility

The current study examined outcomes for participants at age 30. The results clearly show that Amherst College has had a good measure of success in achieving the goal of promoting social mobility. For lower-income students, immersion in an affluent community provided new figures for identification. Participants acquired new, more elite forms of cultural capital helpful in getting along in an affluent world. They gained higher aspirations and new forms of social capital, i.e., connections to alumni, professors, classmates, and their parents who provided information, advice, and support regarding graduate schools and careers. Twelve years after entry to the college, the lower-income

participants had attained upward social mobility. Their educational and occupational attainment, as well as their income were similar to those of their affluent classmates. Two-thirds of the lower-income participants had gone on to complete a graduate or professional degree, 43% had attained doctoral degrees. All were engaged in professional or managerial jobs. Their displays of citizenship, i.e., voting rates, volunteerism, and civic engagement far surpass national averages. The findings are consistent with other research that shows high achieving lower-income students who attend selective schools like Amherst have a better chance of graduating, pursuing graduate education, and have enhanced career outcomes and earnings.¹ Black participants also showed similar outcomes on these measures as compared to White participants.

Learning from Diversity

As for the second goal, learning from diversity, Amherst strove to enhance the learning environment for all students by bringing a more diverse group of students to campus. Reflecting retrospectively at age 30 on what they had learned about race at Amherst, impressively, 81% of participants clearly recalled learning about race through their interactions with peers of a different race. The content of that learning differed by race.

Many White participants had grown up in a predominantly White world and had given little thought to race prior to college. Through relationships with Amherst classmates of color, they gained a heightened awareness of being White and of their own racial privilege. Through those relationships, many White participants learned too about the powerful impact stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination played in Black people's lives. Some became aware that they were the holders of unconscious racial bias. White participants' learning was reflected in what they wanted to teach their children about race – to be conscious of and reject racial stereotypes, to be aware of their own white privilege, and in some cases to be aware of their own racial bias. Importantly, over a third wanted to raise their children in a multi-racial environment in order to combat the invisibility of whiteness, and help their children better understand racial injustice and white privilege.

Many Black participants recalled learning from the heterogeneity that existed among Black students on campus in regard to culture, class, skin tone, and racial identity. Their understanding of what it meant to be Black took on a broader meaning. Beyond that was the learning they experienced from interactions with classmates from racial or ethnic groups they had little exposure to prior to college, e.g., Asians and Latinos. At Amherst, immersed in a predominantly white community, an important part of their learning was about how to maneuver in a privileged white world where they might be the only Black person in the room.

Through interactions with White classmates, Black participants learned about the ignorance and naïveté many White students had about Black people and cultures. They learned, too, about the stereotypes and prejudice White students held, recalling pejorative perceptions and racially biased responses some White students had to them and people of their race. They were exposed to the greater privileges that accrued to White students.

Turning to learning from class diversity, here again interaction with peers stood out as the major contributor. Looking back retrospectively at age 30, 79% of the participants attributed learning about social class to their interactions with peers. Lower-income participants, both Black and White, gained an understanding of the nature of the upper-middle class world they encountered at Amherst, and learned the rules of the game needed to function in that world. They acculturated, acquiring new interests, tastes and preferences that prepared them for the world they would enter after graduation. Affluent students gained an understanding of the great privileges they possessed by seeing the contrast between their lives and that of lower-income classmates. Having been embedded in affluent communities growing up, these privileges that had gone unseen before college.

Struggles That Lie Ahead

Over their four years at Amherst, the lower-income participants had acculturated to the wealthier culture at the college, and they had gained upward social mobility. But there was a cost to their elite education. Just over half the lower-income participants were struggling to bridge the two worlds of home communities and their current communities, something no affluent participants experienced. They found it harder to fit back in with those left behind. They faced difficulties maintaining relationships with family and friends from their home communities, and sharing parts of themselves and their lives – especially work lives – with people who had not undergone the same changes they had. Their relationships with their family members were not as close as those of affluent White participants. That said, for half of the lower-income participants who were struggling to bridge the two worlds, while the gulf between these worlds was still great, their relationships with family were improving. Participants had matured and were better able to cope with their differences. They and their families had become more accepting and appreciative of one another.

Nearly half of the lower-income participants *did not* report a struggle to bridge two worlds. Almost half the lower-income participants who had reported a struggle in 2009 at graduation no longer reported that struggle. They were now established in a more affluent world and had found ways to negotiate relationships with family and friends from home. Many no longer sought a close, unattainable relationship with parents, but

rather sustained continuing, though less deep, connections with both family members and friends, and avoided talking about their differences.

Turning to the world of work, the majority of Black participants faced problems in the workplace due to their race. Seventy-one percent of Black participants reported confronting racial bias, microaggressions and exclusion by colleagues at work. They had to adjust their behavior, often hiding parts of themselves and changing their appearance to please White people – all while trying to remain true to themselves. Almost half the Black participants reported facing a career ceiling based on their race, something no White participants experienced. When they looked systemically at who held the top positions in the organizations they worked for, it was White men.

The challenges Black participants faced at work were not new to many of them. Their parents had prepared them with knowledge and skills to help them cope with the racism they would encounter. Their life experiences confirmed the validity of parental messages that they must work longer and harder than White coworkers, exceed expectations not just meet them, never make a mistake, and be conscious of themselves as representatives of their race. The Black participants, in turn, wanted to pass this awareness on to their children.

Although gender was not a focus of this study as the sample size by group for gender was very small, in looking at the workplace, I felt it would be important to examine whether participants faced a ceiling due to their *gender*, as well as their race and class. Thirty-five percent of the women participants reported facing a career ceiling due to their gender. Like the Black participants, female participants were aware that the top positions in their organizations were filled by White men. In addition, some reported feeling compelled to work longer and harder to overcome implicit gender bias, noted they were the targets of microaggressions, and some were paid less than men for the same work. The Black women felt doubly disadvantaged.

At age 30 participants were completing their identity development, making commitments to romantic partners, and establishing themselves in careers. Only a third had married and only two participants had children. Participants rated marriage and children as moderately important at this point in their lives. These traditional markers of adulthood lay ahead. In the present, work consumed the majority of their time, followed by close relationships. Almost half wished they had more time for romantic relationships and friendships. Three-quarters of the lower-income Black, and almost half the lower-income White participants continued to make some time for community service work, though few affluent participants did so. Most participants had little time for leisure activities, something they also missed.

Participants were optimistic about their futures. Most hoped to marry and have a family, to progress in chosen careers, attain financial stability and own a home. Their central fear was whether they would be able to attain work-life balance – that they would be able to invest themselves in their careers yet have time for family, children, other

relationships, and other interests. Some feared, too, the political climate under the Trump administration – the repudiation of science, and hatred of immigrants and minorities, and worried about how this would impact their lives and society. Because interviews were conducted before the coronavirus pandemic, the resulting economic meltdown, and the widespread multi-racial protests in response to the police killing of George Floyd, both their hopes and fears might be expanded today.

Where Learning Fell Short

Creating a diverse student body does not guarantee that learning will occur from that diversity. Some students embed themselves in groups of peers much like themselves and spend the majority of their time living, eating, socializing, engaging in co-curricular activities with them. These students graduate having missed out on the opportunity to get to know students from very different backgrounds with differing social identities.

Students who interact frequently and form close friendships with classmates of a different race learn through these relationships about racism as it manifests at the individual level. That was true for the participants in this study. What was missing from White participants' learning from peers was an understanding of *systemic* racism. Without choosing to take coursework on race, White students did *not* learn through their interactions with classmates about the structural advantages that come from being White. While half the White participants attributed some learning about race and racial inequality to courses and professors, many of those courses did not deal with systemic racism, or with our country's history with race and racism. That means the majority of White participants left the college without an understanding of the ways racial inequality has historically been intentionally embedded in laws, policies and practices of our institutions. Although systemic racism gained visibility for most White participants in their lives after graduation as police brutality and the Black Live Matter Movement dominated the daily news, that awareness could quickly fade from consciousness. Only 30% percent of White participants reported they would teach their children about the system of racial oppression that exists in this country. Without educating their children in this way, or seeking interracial contact for them, their children are not likely to grow up with an understanding that racism is a problem that implicates them.

Turning to social class, at age 30 only 14% of participants attributed their learning about social class to coursework or professors. Much less coursework was available at the time the Class of 2009 was at the college than is present today. One of the greatest problems facing our country and the world today is growing income inequality. Coursework is needed to understand the sources and consequences of this problem; such learning does not come through interactions with peers.

Addressing Racism

The college community is a microcosm of the larger society. Students, faculty and staff bring their previously internalized stereotypes and prejudices with them to campus – based not only on race, but class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other social identities. It should not be surprising that students of color on our campus and on other campuses across the country report experiencing racial microaggressions inside and outside the classroom, and that less frequently, though repeatedly over the years, they become the targets of purposeful racial attacks meant to hurt them. Black participants in this study still recalled at age 30 pejorative perceptions and racially biased responses some White students had to them and people of their race. Like the Black participants in this study, current students of color report that many spaces on campus at Amherst do not feel free of racial harm. Not only students, but faculty and staff of color as well report facing racial bias. Without addressing racial stereotypes and prejudice on campus, racism at the individual level will continue unabated, and we cannot create a truly inclusive community where all students, faculty and staff can thrive.

Each time racially blatant acts or incidents are committed by White students against Black students, an uproar follows on campus. Members of the Black Student Union (BSU) rightfully express outrage, conversations are held, yet some members of the community remain unconvinced and fail to understand the legitimacy of the anger and indignation expressed by BSU members. When such incidents occur, disciplinary consequences often follow for the individuals or groups responsible for these acts. But the racism exhibited by the individuals involved in each incident is not unique to them. These acts are a symptom of a larger underlying problem we face on campus and in society. Research on implicit bias suggests that we are all enculturated with racial bias, including people of color who internalize negative racial stereotypes about people of their own race.² Unless we respond on a systemic level, and not just to the individuals involved in each incident, the racist incidents will keep occurring.

If colleges want to reduce racist incidents, they need to provide educational programming not just for perpetrators of racial violence, but for all students, faculty, and staff. Following the racist verbal attack by White students on a Black student in the spring, 2020, the BSU offered many suggestions for how to better address the problem, e.g., cultural competency and bias training for all first-year students during orientation as well as for members of the community in leadership roles; and a year-long training program for campus groups that display racially discriminatory behavior.

The BSU and others have suggested we change our disciplinary procedures and train faculty, staff, and students to use restorative justice circles when racial offenses occur. Restorative justice is a non-punitive approach to handle conflict and repair harm done, with roots in indigenous Native American cultures. This approach has been widely

used in the criminal justice system, in K-12 education, and has been increasingly adopted in higher education. The perpetrators who have caused harm to others or to the community are brought together with the individuals or groups they have harmed, along with trained facilitators. All parties share their perspectives on what happened before, during and after the occurrence. The targets talk about how they were harmed by the offense. Facilitators pose questions to support and assist all participants in telling their stories. The group then works together to generate ideas and decide upon the best option to repair the harm done. Training in restorative-justice practices had begun on campus before the most recent racist verbal attack by White students, and these practices have been implemented in dealing with that offense.

The faculty cannot remain on the sidelines. It has a role to play in thinking through how to ensure that students learn more about race, as well as class and other social identities through the curriculum, and from the diversity in the students in our classrooms and on our campus. The education we need to provide our students about racism cannot be accomplished by Student Affairs professionals alone.

The College's Mission

We need to ask ourselves what the purpose of an Amherst education ought to be in today's world. The answer to that question can guide us to a set of goals for the knowledge, skills and values we must impart to our students. Our graduates will be living in a multi-cultural, multi-racial world. Many will assume positions of leadership. How, then, do we prepare them for active citizenship and equip them to work effectively with people who do not share their social identities? On the study survey, the participants expressed their agreement that enhancing a student's ability to live in a multicultural society is part of a higher education's mission. If we believe in that goal, how do we accomplish it?

Amherst College had no mission statement until 2007, when pressure was put on the college to articulate its mission as part of the regular ten-year cycle of review for reaccreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education. The mission statement written at that time brought together beliefs held by faculty, administrators, alumni, and trustees. It still stands, though the composition of the student body, the faculty, and the administration has changed greatly since it was written, as has the world around us. It is important for the faculty to revisit the mission statement, and if found wanting, to join with administrators, alumni and trustees to revise it.

The mission statement says the college "educates students of exceptional potential from all backgrounds" and does so "in order to promote diversity of experience and ideas within a purposefully small residential community."³ It makes a commitment to admitting a diverse group of students from all backgrounds, and the college has done an

amazing job at accomplishing that. But the mission statement makes no commitment to *ensuring* that learning from that diversity will take place. Further, it makes no commitment to support the success of our diverse student body through ensuring equity and inclusion.

Research has shown that students' learning from and about diversity is maximized if it is an integral part of an institution's mission and purpose.⁴ Professor of higher education and diversity Adrianna Kezar, a national expert on student success argues that equity and inclusion need to become part of a college's core mission, as well as of an institution's policies and practices.⁵ To achieve equity and inclusion, all students must encounter a welcoming, safe, positive campus climate that is free of intolerance where they feel valued, and a learning environment that supports them. If the college believes in the importance of learning from diversity, and ensuring equity and inclusion, that should be explicitly stated as part of its mission.

Amherst College has an open curriculum and does not impose any particular courses or subject on all students. The Course Catalogue encourages students to "seek diversity and attempt integration through their course selection"⁶ – a very vague directive at best. In conversations with advisees, advisors are urged to stress the development of "fundamental capabilities such as critical reading, written and oral expression, quantitative reasoning, and proficiency in using information resources" and the achievement of "breadth of understanding through study in a range of disciplines and modes of inquiry." Nothing is said about the importance of learning any particular course content. For the first time since I joined the faculty in 1975, professors' voices are now being heard on campus about the need to ensure that all of our students are educated about the history of racism in the U.S., about how racism persists at a structural level, and more broadly about issues of race, class, gender and inequality. Having worked so hard and purposefully to create a diverse student body, the college needs to make a commitment and provide directives to ensure that learning from and about diversity takes place in the classroom.

Leadership

Without strong leadership, the institutional values and priorities set forth in mission statements will not be turned into action through policies, programs, services, etc.⁷ College presidents play a vital role in the success of carrying out a diversity agenda that will lead to more profound institutional change. They need to articulate the vision, help shape a strategic plan, and empower a web of people to carry out the agenda.⁸

In an assessment of best practices in diversity management, professor of sociology Alexandra Kalev and her colleagues found that the most effective practice entailed the assignment of organizational responsibility for diversity goals to a specific person or

office. In organizations where such responsible parties are not appointed, many diversity goals fall by the wayside.⁹ Further, that person or office must have “the authority, resources, support of and access to top management,”¹⁰ and power to hold others accountable in order to achieve their goals – otherwise effective implementation of programs does not take place. Amherst College took this important step in hiring its first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer in 2016 to lead this effort and establish the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. But this office must not be the sole bearer of diversity work.¹¹ The work must be done at all levels and units of the college.

Other research has shown that diversity goals must be carried out in systemic, intentional ways.¹² Campuses that have created programs “on the side” to address diversity issues have not been as successful in achieving diversity goals as those that addressed the issue systemically. To meet diversity goals, all units at the college need to carry out an examination of possible biases and assumptions expressed in their structures, programs, policies, practices, and procedures to see if they are inclusive and effective.¹³ These biases create a culture that does not support, and even prevents, the success of all students, faculty and staff. Institutional customs and traditions must likewise be scrutinized for possible biases.

Diversity Programming

A considerable amount of diversity training takes place in workplaces as well as in K-12 and higher education, but its effectiveness is open to question.¹⁴ Organizations rarely collect evaluations, and when they do, they are likely to only collect reaction measures at the end of an intervention. Reaction measures yield no information on whether the intervention had any lasting effect. Even if pre-tests and post-tests were given, many studies do not use control groups so no causal connections can be made between the programming and outcomes.

Despite those limitations, well-designed evaluations of diversity programming have been carried out, a few with follow-up evaluations done up to two years after the training. The most comprehensive review of the effectiveness of diversity programming to date was a meta-analysis¹⁵ carried out by social and organizational psychologist Katerina Bezrukova and her colleagues.¹⁶ Bezrukova et al.’s meta-analyses makes clear that the effectiveness of a diversity training depends upon the particular characteristics of the program.

The meta-analysis revealed that trainings such as cultural competency that focus on cognitive outcomes – acquiring knowledge about other social groups – had a much greater effect than trainings that focused on affective outcomes – learning about one’s own and others’ unconscious bias. It is much harder to change people’s unconscious biases and attitudes that may have been inculcated over a lifetime than it is to increase

people's diversity-related knowledge. Further, cognitive learning was more likely to persist over time than affective learning. Attitudes were more likely to shift back over time if trainees returned to an environment where former attitudes were reinforced.

The meta-analysis provides information about the circumstances in which unconscious bias training proved to be most effective. These trainings had their greatest impact when embedded in a larger, well-thought out, integrated program of diversity-related efforts, where the separate components complemented or supported one another. Stand-alone programs that take place in a single session proved to have only a small effect.¹⁷ Further, trainings focused on affective learning were more effective if their focus was not just on increasing awareness of unconscious biases and attitudes, but in addition helped participants overcome interracial communication barriers, improve their situational judgement and responses, and monitor their own actions.¹⁸ Finally, as might be expected, length of training is important. Trainings spread out over time were the most effective, and produced more diversity knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Mike Noon, a professor of human resource management cautions that unconscious bias training is not a quick fix that will eliminate racism because knowing about one's own bias does not necessarily lead to behavior change. It must be part of "an on-going and possibly lengthy process of reflection, discussion and awareness-raising."¹⁹ But importantly, Noon argues that our focus should not be on changing the behavior of individuals, but rather on addressing systemic racism – the structures and contexts that might produce racial bias and discriminatory treatment.²⁰ Organizations may too often default to diversity training, i.e., to changing the views of individuals, as the answer to eliminating racism. But the problem will not be solved if an institution does not also deal with its policies and practices that perpetuate racism and that outlast the individual people who work there.

Academic Courses

Many diversity courses are being taught, yet we know little about the effectiveness of those courses. Most colleges solicit student evaluations of courses at the end of a term, but these student reactions do not inform us about longer-term impact of that learning. A considerable amount of well-designed research, however, does exist and attests to the powerful learning experience provided by the intergroup dialogue courses that were created by the Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan.²¹ Intergroup dialogue courses bring together 12-16 students from two different identity groups with a history of conflict (e.g., White/non-White, men/women). The courses are taught by two trained facilitators, one from each of those identity groups. The dialogue courses are traditionally based on race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. I want to focus on intergroup dialogue courses on race.

I joined with Professor Allen Hart, an African American colleague, to get trained in Ann Arbor to teach this course at Amherst. The course has been by far the most powerful learning experience I have had in my 45 years of teaching at Amherst. Key to the success of the intergroup dialogue course is that students bring their own experiences with race into the classroom as a legitimate and valued part of learning. The course readings link students' personal experiences around race to a socio-historical understanding of individual, institutional, and structural discrimination – to the ways social inequality is embedded in social institutions and individual consciousness, constraining life chances. Facilitators guide the interaction, leading structured activities to develop trust among participants, and helping participants delve deeper over time into conflictual topics. Students engage in respectful, sustained dialogues around racial divisions, learn about each other's life experiences with race, and build skills in intergroup communication and collaboration. Unlike debate, where participants' goals are to win a point by putting down others' viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted, students learn dialogue skills – suspending judgement and listening for understanding.

The intergroup dialogue course we have taught exposes participants in a very intimate way to how classmates of different races see and experience the world, to the pain and trauma students of color may have undergone due to race. Part way through the course students begin working in mixed-race teams of four to complete an Intergroup Collaboration project (ICP), which involves researching a racial inequity or inequality on campus. In the final stage of the course participants consider how to continue the experience of dialogue outside of the classroom. The focus is on building alliances, and empowering students to stand up to inequality.

The most comprehensive outcome research on intergroup dialogues comes from a nine-university study in which students wishing to take an intergroup dialogue course on race or gender were randomly assigned to either an intergroup dialogue course or to a waitlist control group.²² In addition, a comparison group was formed of students matched on race and gender enrolled in social science courses on race or gender that were conducted using traditional lecture/discussion format rather than dialogue format. Participants filled out surveys at the beginning and end of the semester as well as a post-test survey one year later.

Results were consistent, regardless of whether students participated in intergroup dialogue courses on race or gender. Compared to students in either the waitlist control or social science comparison groups, students who took the intergroup dialogue courses showed greater increases on the following variables: intergroup understanding, empathy and motivation to bridge differences, confidence and frequency in taking action, and a post-college commitment to redressing inequality. Intergroup dialogue students showed greater increases in awareness and structural understanding of gender and racial inequality than those in the waitlist control but did not differ from students enrolled in social science courses.

The feedback Professor Hart and I have gotten from our students mirrors the outcomes found by researchers. Examples of those outcomes for our students covered a wide range: using their dialogue skills to engage in difficult conversations about contentious topics in order to better understand others' points of view; calling out racist actions and language used by friends, or microaggressions committed by professors; engaging parents and family members for the first time about race and racial inequality; working with administrators or with sports teams to redress racial inequalities or inequities they collected data on through their Intergroup Collaboration Projects; joining e-boards of affinity groups on campus; taking leadership positions in the Association of Amherst Students (student government). The addition of more intergroup dialogue courses – be they on race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexuality – could help transform the culture of the campus community.

To create effective courses on race and racial inequality, we know something about what works best. Psychologists Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp assessed the relative importance of three goals in trying to reduce prejudice: knowledge, empathy (both taking the perspective of another and emotionally understanding another's situation), and the reduction of intergroup threat and anxiety.²³ They found that the reduction of threat and anxiety must come first, followed by increasing emotional empathy and perspective taking. Knowledge comes last. This sequence of learning is built into the structure of intergroup dialogue courses and is crucial to their success. A lecture course that is entirely knowledge-based will not have much effect in meeting the learning conditions needed to reduce prejudice.

Beyond curricular change, faculty attitudes and awareness need to be addressed. In the uprising that occurred on campus in 2015, and again after the latest racist incident this spring 2020, Black Student Union members have reported a culture of racism not just among some classmates but also in the classrooms of some faculty. Faculty members may unwittingly commit racial microaggressions and may fail to acknowledge and respond to offensive racial comments from students due to a lack of awareness of them or lack of training in how to address them. From their work doing racial climate assessments on many college campuses, professors of higher education Shawn Harper and Charles Davis provide guidance on actions faculty members should take to reduce racism in their classrooms.²⁴ They point out that few faculty members have had the opportunity to meaningfully learn about and discuss race over the course of their educational studies. Most have not had training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to teach a diverse student body, or to manage racial conflicts that might arise in their classrooms. As a first step, Harper and Davis say faculty members must do the work to address their own implicit racial biases that can play out in destructive and hurtful ways, and to acquire racial literacy. While they suggest readings as well as workshops for faculty to attend off campus, more realistically workshops could be run on campus. Faculty members must recognize that they, along with their colleagues share responsibility for

the racial inequities in their classrooms and on campus. The issues raised by Harper and Davis apply to staff as well who, like faculty may not have been educated about race, and lack the training, skills and knowledge to work effectively with diverse co-workers and students. They too, can be the perpetrators of racial bias and must be part of any campus-wide program to address racism.

Conclusion

Amherst College has been highly successful in creating a diverse community of students who differ in their social identities, perspectives, and life experiences. Over the past 15 years, the challenge has been to try to ensure that all those students feel welcomed into the inclusive community and that they have the supports necessary to reach their potential. The college has made many essential and important changes. It has hired a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to lead this effort. The Center for Teaching and Learning was established to help faculty acquire more inclusive learning practices to better accommodate students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles. Cultural and identity resource centers have been established and staffed, and have often become second homes for students – the Center for International Student Engagement, the Queer Resource Center, the Multicultural Resource Center, the Women’s and Gender Center, the Center for Diversity and Student Leadership. Amherst has added new positions, changed policies and practices, always with the goal of making the college a better place for everyone in the community. Challenges continue – and racism is one of them. We must resist the temptation to feel like the work is done.

Be they subtle or overt, acts of racial bias, harassment and harm continue to occur on campus, directed not only at students, but at faculty and staff as well. We have no reporting system in place for documenting such instances so it is difficult to recognize and acknowledge the magnitude and significance of these racist behaviors. As sociologist Joe Feagin and his colleagues wrote decades ago: “by not educating white students to the reality of everyday racism, the predominantly white faculties at most universities participate as accessories in its maintenance and perpetuation.”²⁵ I am hopeful that the college community going forward will determine how to better educate everyone on campus – students, faculty and staff about racial inequality as well as inequalities based on social class and other social identities – so that everyone may join in the work of dismantling inequalities on campus, and help build a community in which all will thrive. Participants’ reflections at age 30 on their Amherst experience, and on their lives since graduation help illuminate the strengths of their Amherst education and point as well to the need to better equip all students with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills essential for citizenship and leadership in our pluralistic democracy.

Notes

¹ Grincola & Kahlenberg (2016).

² Fletcher (1999).

³ For the Amherst College mission statement, see <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/facts/mission> (accessed April 6, 2020).

⁴ Clayton-Peterson et al. (2007); Harper & Hurtado (2007).

⁵ Kezar (2019).

⁶ See <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/college-catalog/1920?mmtid=567465> (accessed April 6, 2020).

⁷ Wade-Golden & Matlock (2007).

⁸ Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin, & Quaye (2008).

⁹ Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly (2006).

¹⁰ Kalev et al. (2006), p. 592.

¹¹ Wade-Golden & Matlock (2007).

¹² Kezar (2019).

¹³ Wade-Golden & Matlock (2007).

¹⁴ Results are mixed when evaluations are done and some programs have been found to have negative effects (Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006).

¹⁵ A meta-analysis is statistical approach to reviewing research. Attention is paid not only to whether a diversity program had an effect, but to the magnitude or size of the effect, and to the conditions that may magnify or reduce the strength of the effect. Effects may be small, medium or large in magnitude, with small effects considered not to be “large enough to be visible to the naked eye” (Cohen, 1988, p. 26). In the meta-analysis by Bezrukova et al. (2016), effect sizes were measured using Hedge’s *g*, a measure similar to Cohen’s *d*. Effect sizes of .20 are considered to be small, .50 to be medium, and .80 to be large.

¹⁶ Bezrukova, et al. (2016). Earlier narrative summaries and meta-analyses of the effectiveness of diversity programming have been done over the years (Kalev et al., 2006; Kalinoski et al., 2013; Paluck & Green, 2009).

¹⁷ Programs had a medium size effect on affective learning if they were integrated into a larger program ($g = .69$) but only a small effect when they were stand-alone programs ($g = .27$) (Bezrukova et al., 2016).

¹⁸ The effect size for programs focused on awareness only was $g = .31$, for skills/behavior only was $g = .46$, and for the combination of the two was $g = .46$.

¹⁹ Noon (2018), p. 206.

²⁰ Noon (2018).

²¹ See <https://igr.umich.edu/respub/publications> (accessed April 6, 2020).

²² Twenty-six race dialogues with 26 control groups, and 26 gender dialogues with control groups were run. See Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga (2009); Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell (2009).

²³ Pettigrew & Tropp (2008).

²⁴ Harper & Davis (2016).

²⁵ Feagin, Vera, & Imani (1996), p. 70.

Appendix A: Research Methods

My first task was to locate the original sample of participants who entered the study in 2005. I was extremely fortunate that the Alumni Office keeps excellent track of Amherst graduates. They gave me e-mail addresses for most of the former participants in this study. With additional on-line searching, I was able to acquire email addresses for all but one of the participants.

Data Collection

I contacted participants via email. The solicitation read: "I am interested in learning more about the paths you and other participants have traveled since leaving Amherst – work, study, the community you live in, your relationships with family and friends. I also want to hear your thoughts looking back on your Amherst experience: how it may have helped both to shape your life and to prepare you for the world you have entered today." I informed participants that the study would involve both an online survey and a 1.5 to 2.5-hour interview. The email also emphasized the importance of each individual's participation, and informed the participants that they would be given a \$50 prepaid Visa card for completing the study. The email contained a link to the on-line survey.

Many participants did not respond to the initial email. Those who did not respond received follow up emails at two to three-week intervals for several months. I kept emailing individuals who expressed an initial interest in participating but did not complete the survey, individuals who completed the survey but did not offer a time when they would be free to be interviewed, individuals who set up a time to be interviewed but did not complete the necessary informed consent before the interview. For

participants who never responded to any of my emails, I have no way to know whether the email addresses I had were incorrect and my solicitation was never received. I persisted for several months before I determined that no more people were going to participate.

Participants first completed an on-line survey that took about 20 minutes (See Appendix B). The survey began with the Amherst College informed consent form. On the informed consent for the interview, I gave participants the option to waive confidentiality so that identifying information might be used but not their name in writing up the research results. Forty-four percent of participants agreed to give up confidentiality. More identifying information is given when quoting those participants.

Following completion of the survey, participants scheduled a time for the interview and chose whether to be interviewed by phone or online using Zoom.com, a video conferencing software. One participant lived in Amherst and was interviewed face-to-face. Participants completed an informed consent for the interview. The interview questions can be found in Appendix C. All phone interviews and the one face-to-face interview were recorded using an Olympus digital voice recorder. Zoom.com produced an audio recording of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed for later coding.

The interview process took place from April to July of 2017. Most of the interviews were conducted by the researcher (a White woman). Interviews were also conducted by a Black woman, and a White man. The majority of the interviews lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. To code the interview questions, my students and I used Dedoose, a software data-analysis program designed for use in mixed-methods research that consists of qualitative as well as quantitative data.

Analysis of the Interview Data

My students and I coded the interview data inductively using a grounded theory approach to the development of coding categories to capture themes unique to the sample.¹ This approach enables relevant ideas to emerge from the data. Responses to the interview questions were read statement by statement by the author and a student coder with the goal of developing categories to capture the major ideas participants were expressing. As more transcripts were read, we refined, redesigned and collapsed these inductive coding categories until most of the content was being captured by a smaller group of categories. The transcripts were then read and content was classified by a single coder. All codes were checked by a second coder, disagreements were discussed and resolved. At times a participants' response to a question was not fully comprehensible and could not be reliably classified into the existing coding categories, or a response was missing because an interviewer inadvertently left out a question. This caused the sample size to be slightly lower for some coding categories. Sample sizes are presented for each category by group in the endnotes.

Where participants' responses to themes took the form of a few identifiable categories, I present the percentage of participants in each group whose responses fell into those categories. For example, when examining participants' hopes and fears for the future, many different hopes and fears were raised, but we were able to reduce those hopes and fears to a few identifiable categories. Percentages are reported for those categories for each group. In other cases, responses participants gave could not be reduced to a few categories, as many different themes were brought up by only few participants. In those cases, percentages are not reported.

The percentages must be interpreted with caution. Themes that emerged from the data sometimes reflected issues on participants' minds that were not something I asked participants directly about. For example, I never asked participants about color-blind racism, but that was a theme that arose from analysis of the data. Or when asking participants about the challenges of race in the workplace, many Black participants talked about the socialization messages they had gotten from their parents that helped them deal with the types of racial bias they were experiencing. Yet I never asked participants about the racial socialization they had gotten from their parents. Had participants been questioned directly about some of the themes that emerged from the data, percentages might have changed. These themes are extremely important as they point us to areas important to participants' experiences that need to be explored in future research.

Editing Quotations

Sociologists Kenneth Fasching-Varner² and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva³ have written cogently about the level and meaning of the incoherence present when White people talk about race. Such incoherence was definitely present in these interviews. Stylistic analysis of speech went beyond the scope of this study. I was most interested in presenting the content of participants' thoughts. I chose to edit quotations to make them more readable and understandable. All false starts and repetitive fillers such as "you know," "like," "kind of," have been removed. In instances where the meaning participants were trying to express was not fully intelligible, small parts of quotations have been left out and replaced by points of ellipsis (i.e., ...).

Use of Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics are presented in the endnotes. These tests assume random samples were obtained from the population of Amherst students, which was not the case. I began with a cluster sample of students from the Class of 2009. Within that cluster, my sample was further stratified by both race and class. Within these strata, I did not have a random sample of Black students – all Black students were invited to participate. However, the students I selected from each group while not random had a high

probability of being representative of their groups. Given the high response rate for participants in the age 30 sample, I have calculated inferential statistics because the participants were likely representative of their groups. For the frequency data, because of the small sample size, expected values were less than five in many cases. In these cases percentages by group are reported, but chi-square tests are inappropriate and were not calculated.

Notes

¹ Glaser & Strauss (1967); Strauss & Corbin (1990).

² Fasching-Varner (2012).

³ Bonilla-Silva (2018).

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Work and Graduate Education

Job History. Participants were asked to: "Please list jobs you've held for six months or longer since you left Amherst College, in the order in which you held them. Please indicate who you worked for, the type of work you were doing, start and end date, and whether it was mostly full-time or part time."

Current Income. Participants were asked to: "Please mark the category that best represents YOUR OWN earned income in 2016 before taxes. Please include income from jobs, net income from business." The ten response categories included: Less than \$1,000, \$1,000 to \$9,999, \$10,000 to \$19,999, \$20,000 to \$29,999, \$30,000 to \$49,999, \$50,000 to \$74,999, \$75,000 to \$99,999, \$100,000 to \$149,999, \$150,000 to \$199,99, \$200,000 or more.

Job satisfaction. Participants were asked: "In general, how satisfied are you with your professional life now?" The item was rated on a five-point scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Graduate Degrees. Participants were asked two questions to assess graduate education: "List any degree programs you have completed and indicate the degree you received.", "List any degree program in which you are currently enrolled and expect to receive a degree."

Graduate School Debt. Participants were asked: "What was the total amount of money you borrowed, if any, to finance your GRADUATE education?"

Democracy Outcomes

Questions used to assess democracy outcomes were derived from Wade-Golden, Matlock, & Gurin (2008/2015).

Voting Behavior. Participants were asked two questions about voting: "If you are a U.S. citizen, did you vote in the 2016 presidential election?", "Do you vote in local and/or state elections?" The response choices were yes, no.

Political and Civic Engagement. Participants were asked to: “Please indicate how important each of the following has been in your life since college.” Three items were used to assess political and civic engagement: “influencing the political structure (e.g. voting, education campaigns, get-out-the-vote, etc.)”, “influencing social policy”; “working to correct social and economic inequalities.” Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important. The three items formed a reliable scale measuring *political and civic engagement*, Chronbach’s alpha = .80. Items were averaged and higher scores indicated giving greater importance to political and civic engagement.

Volunteer Activities. Participants were asked: “To what extent have you participated as a volunteer in the following activities since college? Indicate whether you were a member/participant, how often you have done volunteer work in each, and whether you took a leadership role.” The 14 activities listed included: youth organizations (e.g., Little league coach, scouting, etc.); professional or trade association; political organizations or local government activities; religious activities (not including worship services); community centers, neighborhood improvement or social-action associations or civil rights groups; social service or social welfare volunteer work—such as hospital volunteering, tutoring, etc.; art, discussion, music, reading or study groups, museum board, cultural or historical societies; educational organizations; service organizations —such as Rotary, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Veterans, etc.; alumni activities —such as fund raising, student recruiting, organizing reunion activities, etc.; national charities—such as The American Cancer Society, The American Red Cross, etc.; environmental or conservation activities; groups reflecting racial/ethnic background; groups reflecting gender or sexual orientation. Participants could specify another group if not listed. A total was calculated for number of activities participated in frequently since college, and the number in which leadership was taken.

Interest in Public Affairs: Participants were asked: “Since you left Amherst College, have you become: less interested, remained the same, more interested in public affairs?”

Relationships with Friends, Family, Co-workers

Friends. Participants were asked three questions to examine the race of friends whom participants had gotten to know well since college: “Since leaving college, have you gotten to know well 2 or more Black people?” The question repeated for “2 or more White people?”, “2 or more Asian, Asian American, Latinx, Native American, or mixed-race people?” The two response choices were yes, no.

Marriage: Participants were asked: “Are you currently (check one)”: married, living with someone in a marriage-like relationship, widowed, separated, divorced, never married.”

Children: Participants were asked: “How many children (including adopted and stepchildren) have you ever had?” Response choices were none, ____number of children.

Importance of Marriage, Children, Living Near Relatives. Three items were used to assess the importance of close relationships: “How important is it to you to be married?”, “How important is it to you to have children?”, “How important is it to you to live close to parents or relatives?” These items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important.

Appendix B

Satisfaction with Personal Life. Participants were asked: “In general, how satisfied are you with your personal life now?” The item was measured on a five-point scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied.

Self-definition

Gains in Socioeconomic Status. Participants were asked to: “Characterize your current socioeconomic status in comparison to the socioeconomic status of your family of origin.” Response choices were: much lower, slightly lower, the same, slightly higher, much higher.

Frequency of Thought about Racial Identity. Participants were asked: “How often do you think about yourself as a member of the following social groups?” The only group analyzed was “race/ethnicity.” Frequency was rated on a four-point scale from 1 = hardly ever to 4 = a lot.

Political Views. “Thinking about your political views, please indicate where you would place yourself on this scale.” Response choices were: extremely conservative, conservative, slightly conservative, moderate, middle of the road, slightly liberal, liberal, progressive, haven't thought much about it.

Views on Diversity in Higher Education

Three items were used to assess views on racial and ethnic diversity in United States colleges and universities. Participants were asked to: “Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each.” The items included: “A diverse student body is essential to teaching students the skills they need to succeed and lead in the work environments of the 21st century”, “Colleges and universities should have a requirement for graduation that students take at least one course covering the role of ethnicity in society”, “Enhancing a student's ability to live in a multicultural society is part of a university's mission.” The three items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

How Learning at Amherst Impacted Life After Graduation

Four items were used to assess the impact of learning done at Amherst. Participants were asked: “To what extent did your educational and social experience at Amherst help you develop in these areas?” Items included: “your ability to be an effective leader”, “your interest in being an active member of your community”, “your commitment to social justice”, “your ability to work effectively and get along with people of different races/cultures.” The four items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Jobs and Graduate School Attendance

- Could you trace your path through your 20s in terms of internships, part-time jobs, full-time jobs, starting with what you did right after college. We're interested in finding out why you took the jobs or internships you took. Specifically: Did you take any jobs you felt you were overqualified for because you needed the money? Did you take jobs or internships that you saw as a stepping stone to other jobs or a career? Did you take jobs or internships that then determined the community in which you live, or did you pick a community in which you wanted to live and seek a job there?
- What is your current job?
- How satisfied are you with your current job and salary? Please explain.
- Have you taken graduate courses toward a degree since completing your undergraduate degree? If yes, in what subject area and at what university? What factors led you to decide to go on to get a graduate degree?
- If you are currently in graduate school, what are your job aspirations once you finish your graduate degree?
- Are you planning on pursuing any further education?

Challenges of Race, Class and Gender in the Workplace

- What challenges, if any, do you face at your current job based on your race?
- What challenges, if any, do you face at your current job based on your social class of origin?
- Do you feel you have to change the presentation of your identity to fit in at work? If yes, how so?
- Do you feel you face a ceiling in the organization you work for due to your race, class or gender, or do you feel that you have an equal shot at promotion?

Close Relationships with Family, Friends, Romantic Partners, Mentors

- Have you returned to live in your home community? If yes, what factors influenced that decision? What do you see as the costs and benefits of having returned?
- If you left your home community were there any issues you struggled with in making the decision not to return to your home community? What were they? How was your decision received by your family?
- Has your perspective changed about your home community since you left Amherst?
- What is your relationship with your family of origin like now in terms of closeness, comfort, understanding?
- What is it like to be back home?
- In what ways, if any, do you think your attitudes and beliefs may be different from some of your close family members?
- If your beliefs are dissimilar from some close family members, how do you handle that?
- Are there parts of your current life or who you are now that go unmentioned in your relationships with family members, i.e., things you find it difficult to talk about? If so, could you describe those things?
- Do you feel you are struggling with living in two different worlds – the world of home communities and your current life and community? If yes, can you describe that struggle?
- Has the distance between these two worlds grown or diminished since you left Amherst?
- Have you maintained friendships with friends from the home communities you grew up in? If yes, what role do they play in your life now?
- Are there parts of who you are now, or aspects of your current life that get left out of your relationships with friends from your home community? If yes, what parts of yourself or your current life get left out? What things, if any, do you find difficult to talk about? What things, if any, do you feel they do not understand about you and your current life?
- Have you maintained friendships with friends from Amherst? If yes, what role do your former Amherst friends play in your life now?
- Are you in a committed romantic relationship? If yes, are you married? Do you think the relationship will lead to marriage?
- Do you have children? If yes, How many? What are their ages?
- Since you graduated from Amherst, have there been people in your life who have served as mentors or role models for you that have helped guide the path you have taken? If yes, who are they? Could you describe the functions they have served in your life?

Reflections on Experience at Amherst and Learning about Race and Class

- Some people feel that their college years were a period of great change in themselves, e.g., in their attitudes, beliefs, identity, while others feel that they hardly changed at all. Are there any ways in which you feel you changed over your years at Amherst? What might these be?

Appendix C

- What do you feel brought about change – can you recall any particular people, experiences, or events that were responsible for initiating this change?
- Focusing specifically on issues of race, can you think of any particular experiences with people of other racial and ethnic groups at Amherst that had a particular impact on you – that changed your ideas in any way – ideas about race or race relations, or your feelings about other racial or ethnic groups? If yes, please describe the experiences and the impact they had on you.
- Can you think of experiences at Amherst that may have prepared you to participate in a racially/ethnically diverse society? If so, please describe the experiences and how they helped prepare you to participate in a racially/ethnically diverse society. Did these experiences with racial and ethnic diversity occur in the classroom, with peers outside the classroom, with faculty, through co-curricular activities?
- Do you feel you were pushed at Amherst to examine your own beliefs, biases, assumptions about race? If yes, where did that push come from, e.g., courses, professors, classmates, staff, speakers?
- How comfortable do you feel now interacting with people from different racial/ethnic groups?
- Did you learn something at Amherst about the privileges associated with being White? If yes, what was the source of your learning, e.g., courses, professors, classmates, staff, speakers?
- Did you learn something at Amherst about the privileges associated with being affluent? If yes, what was the source of your learning, e.g., courses, professors, classmates, staff, speakers?
- Are there ways in which you feel you assimilated to the culture of Amherst College over your years at the college (e.g., in your tastes, dress, interests, attitudes)? If yes, could you give some examples? What costs and benefits, if any, do you feel you experienced from this assimilation process?
- Do you feel being at Amherst influenced the aspirations you had? If yes, in what ways?
- Have you ever drawn on connections you made at Amherst and the alumni network in getting connected to job opportunities? If yes, how were those connections made, and what outcomes have they led to?
- Were there one or more faculty or staff members at the College who had a strong impact on your intellectual and/or personal development? If yes, can you describe how you benefitted from these relationships?
- Looking back, how well satisfied are you with your overall college experience?
- Have you acquired a different understanding of your experience over time? Please explain.

Role of Race and Class in Current Life

- Where do you live?
- What is the racial and class makeup of your neighborhood?
- Are you more or less aware of race and racism day-to-day now than you were upon graduating from Amherst? Why is that?

Appendix C

- How much thought do you give to racial inequalities in your day-to-day life? What kinds of things do you think about?
- How would you describe your social class?
- Would you say your class identity has changed since college? If so, could you describe the change?
- Are you more or less aware of class day-to-day now than you were upon graduating from Amherst? If yes, why is that?
- How much thought do you give to class-based inequalities in your day-to-day life? What kinds of things do you think about?
- If you have children now, or hope to do so in the future, are there messages you would want to give your children about race or racism? If so, what are they?
- If you have children now, or hope to do so in the future, are there messages you would want to give your children about social class? If so, what are they?

Current Community and Civic Engagement

- What type of volunteer work, if any, have you done and/or are you doing now?
- How many hours a week do you devote to volunteer work?
- Is there a volunteer activity or activities you're particularly passionate about? Can you tell me more about them?

Current Life Structure, Hopes and Fears

- Where would you say most of your time and energy goes at present, e.g., work, school, relationships, children, volunteer activities, sports, hobbies?
- Are there parts of yourself that get left out of this life structure, e.g., interests or relationships which you would like to have a more central role in your life than they do now? If yes, what, if anything, would you like changed?
- How does your life now compare to what you hoped for when you graduated from Amherst in terms of love and work?
- What hopes and fears do you have about your future?
- How optimistic do you feel about the future for yourself?

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