UPDATING STATUS: TRACING COLLEGE WOMEN'S DIVERGING EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS WITH FACEBOOK

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Updating Status: Tracing College Women's Diverging Educational Pathways with Facebook

Dissertation directed by Dr. Margaret Eisenhart

ABSTRACT

As young people incorporate digital media into the ecologies of their daily lives, new technologies play an important role in how they experience higher education while simultaneously creating a digital record of their educational pathways. Little research has been conducted that explores how Millennials' forays into college life are defined by and documented with digital media.

In this dissertation, I draw on data from the Female Recruits Explore Engineering (FREE) and FREE Pathways studies (xploreengineering.org). These longitudinal studies were designed to understand the educational pathways of academically talented, women of color from low and lower-middle income families. After their high school graduation in 2009, Facebook was incorporated into the ethnographic study. The women's wall pages, information pages and participation on a FREE Pathways group page were a "lens" for research

In my analysis, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) provided me with a conceptual framework to understand Facebook as a cultural artifact. A cultural artifact in the young women's lives, Facebook mediated their participation in culturally figured worlds and affected their social positioning with respect to higher education.

After high school, the women's educational pathways diverged based on their access to financial aid and scholarships. Some of the women were fully enrolled in four-year universities while others struggled to enroll or stay enrolled at local community colleges. These diverging

pathways were documented on Facebook as the women narrated their pathways in the group page posts and updated their educational enrollment and experiences through status updates on wall pages and biographical listings on information pages.

Facebook mediated participation in figured worlds in particular ways that support college going women, but worked to marginalize women who are having trouble gaining access to college. Facebook stabilized and magnified differences between women and reinforced their social positioning as some seemed to be achieving the upward social mobility they desired while others felt that their dreams were put on pause. The historically and culturally-driven structure of the social media platform contributed to the reproduction of the women's social positioning based on their access to college-oriented economic, social and cultural capital.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In the last decade, young people in the United States have adopted new technologies and incorporated digital media into their lives with great facility. Mobile phones, personal computers and internet access afford new modes of communication and spaces for their participation in a wide range of communities. For example, in 2004 the Pew Research Center began surveying teens ages 12-17 about their use of technology and found that forty-five percent owned cell phones. By 2010, ninety-six percent of young people (ages 12-28) in the United States owned a cell phone, ninety-three percent reported going "online," and seventy-three percent of them used social media sites (Lenhart, Smith and Zickuhr, 2010). Telephones and computer internet access were once seen as separate technologies, but the advent of smartphones with internet access, internet phone services (e.g. Skype), and websites with messaging functions now allows young people to use digital media in new and complementary ways.

Along with increased access and use of digital media by young people is the recent shift to Web 2.0 technologies where individuals can access information via the internet and also help author its content. The availability of personal websites, do-it-yourself communities (e.g. DIY creative media production), blogs (web logs), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia, an open forum encyclopedia), and social networking websites (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn) create new possibilities for the ways that youth knowledge is generated, shared and accessed. The wide-spread adoption of digital media by young people in the United States has become a defining characteristic of the Millennial generation.

Millennials are on track to become the most educated generation in American history, a trend driven by increasing rates of college attendance and attainment of graduate degrees needed in a knowledge and information-driven economy (Taylor and Keeter, 2010). However, access to college is not evenly distributed: Low-income students of color often attend secondary schools with more limited funding and resources (Gándara and Contreras, 2009), must negotiate complicated arrangements to maintain their enrollment in college (Valadez, 2008), and draw on unique sources of linguistic, cultural and familial knowledge to overcome marginalization in institutions of higher education (Yosso, 2006).

As young people incorporate digital media into the ecologies of their daily lives, new technologies are playing an important role in how they experience higher education and simultaneously creating a digital record of their educational pathways. However, little research has been conducted that explores how Millennials' forays into college life, especially as first generation college students are defined by and documented with digital media. As they take Facebook with them into college and adulthood, it is important to look at the role of social media sites as mediators of their social networks, cultural capital, and college experiences.

Purpose of the Study

In this dissertation, I provide a detailed account of a group of academically talented and highly motivated women of color from low- and lower-middle-income urban families as they embarked on their college careers. Inspired by the young women's courage and aspiration to find personal and professional success through education, I set out to understand their educational and life pathways after high school.

Digital media, and in particular the Facebook profiles of this group of young women, provided a rich record of the women's lives, especially as they documented their educational pathways and the contexts that shaped their identities, understandings and decisions related to higher education. The academically talented women in this study understood themselves as good students and hoped for futures where they would become college educated professional women. While all of the women planned to attend college after high school, financial resources meant that only some of them were able to enroll, while others traveled unanticipated pathways into adulthood.

Facebook generated a record of ways that the women responded with both disappointment and courage to this virtually-mediated and educationally-based social positioning. Ethnographic data about the larger context of the women's lives informed my understanding of Facebook in the women's lives. As a result of this methodological approach, I was able to situate their use of Facebook within historical and cultural contexts to highlight the ways that Facebook mediated their social positioning as first-generation college students.

Arrangement of the Dissertation

In the following chapter, I situate my research in the growing body of literature about youth culture, digital media and studies about Facebook. Research from the last decade has established that digital media are often incorporated into everyday practices and help mediate social relationships and identity formation. Young people often use digital media creatively: computer-mediated technologies can help youth develop interests, organize around shared interests and emerge as commercially and politically salient groups.

Digital media practices among young people are shaping the context for formal education and are valued as a source of inspiration to reconsider what literacy and classroom instruction could involve. At the same time, digital media seem to reproduce existing inequities based on access and knowledge about technologies. Among college students, Facebook has been an important form of digital media that specifically mediates social networks, students' identity formation and the context for higher education. Questions remain about how Facebook contributes to the reproduction of "digital divides" and its use among diverse groups of college-age students.

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) provides a significant framework to understand digital media as cultural artifacts in young people's lives. In chapter three, I elaborate on their theory with particular attention to figured worlds, cultural artifacts, and social positioning. Conceptualizing digital media as cultural artifacts, I look to other anthropological theories to understand how such artifacts mediate distributed and collective knowledge in young people's lives.

In chapter four, I outline my methodology. I focused on digital media within an ongoing ethnographic project: the Female Recruits Explore Engineering (FREE) and FREE Pathways studies (xploreengineering.org). I rely on data from the FREE studies as well as supplemental data collection for this dissertation. Incorporating Facebook into an ethnographic study provided me with a "lens" to engage in research about educational pathways and a unique vantage point to learn how participants were incorporating digital media as they pursued those pathways.

In the remaining chapters, I present the young women's educational aspirations, their diverging pathways into higher education and work, and social media as an artifact in their social networks and social positioning two years after graduating from high school. I begin by

introducing some of the women and presenting what I learned about their educational aspirations. I consider how they present themselves as "good students" in an education system they saw as a viable way to achieve upward social mobility for themselves and their families.

After high school, the women's educational pathways diverged. Some of the women were fully enrolled in four-year universities while others struggled to enroll or stay enrolled at local community colleges. Facebook functioned as a node in the women's networks that supported communication with friends and family and as a resource for them to author identities as good students (whether they were in school or not). The historical, cultural, and digital characteristics of the platform also stabilized and privileged certain kinds of knowledge, which reinforced their diverging life trajectories by positioning them with respect to their economic, social and cultural capital.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Facebook figured prominently in my data collection and was a popular form of digital media that the young women and their friends were using in 2009-2010. Like other young people in the United States, the young women incorporated devices like mobile phones and personal computers into their everyday lives to access a range of software programs and web platforms. In this chapter, I consider the growing body of literature about youth culture and digital media to understand how the young women's adoption and use of digital media fits into broader trends in digital media use among young people.

In this chapter, I begin by addressing young people's use of digital media in their everyday lives to support friendship and interest-driven practices. The adoption of digital media is not frivolous, as these everyday practices support young people's formation of identities. With the proliferation of digital media in the lives of young people, many scholars in education, cultural studies, and literacy have concerned themselves with the social consequences of widespread digital media use by young people, including ramifications for youth's agency. In the second section of this chapter, I address the tensions that exist between youth empowerment and increased vulnerability with digital media use. Then I turn to ways youth cultural practices involving digital media are reshaping the context for formal education in the United States through new literacies and digital divides. In the final section of this chapter, I consider the importance of ethnography and digital anthropology as methodological approaches to generate new knowledge and understanding about digital media in the lives of young people.

Digital Media in the Lives of Young People

Research from the last decade has established that digital media are often incorporated into everyday practices and help mediate young people's social relationships and identity formation. For example, young people adopt new technologies to accomplish relevant and mundane tasks such as scheduling, meeting friends, and seeking help on homework assignments (Ito, Okabe, and Matsuda, 2006), to support their relationship with peers, and to develop their interests (boyd, 2008; Ito et al., 2010).

In *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out*, Mizuko (Mimi) Ito and her colleagues (2010) consider young people's engagement with cell phones and internet in the United States and Japan. They group young people's practices into two genres: friendship-driven and interest-driven participation. David Buckingham argues that these practices support young people's formation of identities by supporting their *identification* with particular groups (Buckingham, 2008).

Friendship-driven practices using new media refer to the ways young people have taken advantage of opportunities to "hang out" with friends on social network sites. In her analysis of young people's use of social media networks, "Why Youth ♡ Social Networks" (2008), danah boyd illustrates how young people engage in many of the activities of peer socialization and identity formation that they would otherwise do off-line. For example, they form friendships using social media sites, articulate identities as they generate web-based profiles of themselves, and position themselves in relation to adult concerns about safety and morality as they make decisions about privacy settings online.

Interest-driven participation, or "geeking out" (Ito et al., 2010), includes creative and in-depth engagement in their particular interests, including learning to program or use software,

search engines and specific websites to develop competencies and skills around topics of interest to them. Young people's willingness to experiment, or "mess around" with digital technologies, independently and in peer groups, can support peer relationships and spur new interests as they encounter new forms of content, acquire knowledge, and develop digital media capabilities (Ito, 2010).

Young people use digital media to explore interests and strengthen their relationships with known social ties. In "Mobile Identity," Gitte Staldt (2008) illustrates how young people's use of mobile phones reinforces their membership in peer and family networks. She found that "the mobile [phone] is the glue that holds together various nodes in [their] social networks: it serves as the predominant personal tool for the coordination of everyday life, for updating oneself on social relations, and for the collective sharing of experiences" (p. 161).

Digital devices like mobile phones can also function as symbols that help young people accomplish developmental tasks of group membership and entry into adulthood. While Staldt considers phones the glue that holds together various connections in young people's social lives, Jennifer Cole (2011) describes how, amidst changing economic relationships for urban African youth, mobile phones and knowledge of popular culture serve as symbolic representations of adulthood that young people can leverage in their struggle to "count as adult" in some West African communities. Possession and use of digital technologies can symbolically represent maturity and status in some contexts.

Facebook and College Life

Like other forms of digital media, Facebook is an important mediator of social relationships and identity formation for users. First introduced at Harvard University in 2005,

Facebook was developed in the context of peer group cultural practices at an elite university in the United States. A social network site, Facebook is a unique type of digital media: danah boyd and Nicole Ellison (2008) define social network sites such as Facebook as "services" with three main functions to: "(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 211).

Compared to other social network sites, like Friendster, LinkedIn and MySpace, which come from non-college settings and promote the sharing of information and social networking around other practices, Facebook is unique in its origins in a university peer space. Core features of the platform support information about college social activities, college enrollment status, relationship status and college "friends" or social networks. The privileging of U.S. college information and networks is an enduring and defining feature of the Facebook platform. In 2006, Facebook was made available to corporate networks and then made publicly available in the United States and internationally (boyd and Ellison, 2008).

Its popularity among university students is due in part to functions that help students with their social integration into university life, including forming new friendships at their university, maintaining friendships from before college, and planning and finding out about college social events (Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Holley, 2013). In an influential analysis of college students' use of Facebook, Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe (2007) analyzed the relationship between Facebook and social capital. They found that Facebook use supported students' formation of "bridging capital," or the formation of social ties that supported their integration into campus life by encouraging them to activate "latent" ties and enabling the broadcasting of information and requests (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2009).

Facebook is generally regarded as a social media technology that is used among peers outside of formal classroom contexts. It is most commonly used by students as they negotiate the "identity politics" of being a student in "backstage" arenas of college life by posting about their classroom experiences, interactions with faculty, and relationships with other students (Selwyn, 2009). Its primary use is in facilitating social relationships between peers, and in most cases not with parents or professors. For example, students report that they consider Facebook an undesirable channel for communication with faculty and a medium for "talking about work," but not a venue for "doing work" (Bugeia, 2006; Podder, Mosteller, and Scholder, 2009).

Facebook also provides a platform or space for the display of identities. In a detailed analysis of college students' profile pages and surveys about use, Pempek, Yermoloyeva and Calvert (2009) found that photographs, media preferences, religious beliefs, political ideology, and employment were some of the most common indicators of student identity displayed on Facebook pages (see also Stine, 2008). The display of photographs and certain kinds of personal information suggest that a certain type of "impression management" and friendship performance are part of the "naturalistic" behavior on Facebook as people not only actively post information but are able to view other people's content (boyd and Ellison, 2008).

Like many Facebook participants, the young women in the study leveraged Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family members, thus incorporating the technology to support their supportive social ties to family and friends while reinforcing their interests in going to college. The incorporation of digital media into everyday practices meant that the women talked about Facebook and digital media in general as "part of their lives" and the content of digital archives reflected their participation in salient figured worlds, especially school, family and peers. While digital media and educational pathways might initially have seemed to be two distinct lines of

inquiry, given young people's incorporation of digital media in everyday practices, they are actually tightly woven in the young women's lives. As they pursued college degrees after high school graduation, Facebook became a resource and space for them to display features of their good student identities.

Youth Empowerment and Vulnerability

Youth Organizing and Political Mobilization

The widespread adoption of digital media among young people in the United States has led many scholars to consider how digital media might be contributing to the unification and mobilization of young people to have more power and influence in social and political processes. Young people's interest in and facility with digital media have led to optimism about the possibilities for youth civic and political participation: Ito and her colleagues (2010) raise the possibility that digital media might enable youth to form political connections, organize, and have a more authoritative "youth voice:"

> If we look at children and youth through the lens of digital media, we have a population that has been historically subject to a high degree of systematic and institutional control in the kinds of information and social communication to which they have access. This is one reason why the alchemy between youth and digital media has been distinctive; it disrupts the existing set of power relations between adult authority and youth voice. While many studies of children, youth, and media have for decades stressed the status of young people as competent and full social subjects, digital media increasingly insist that we acknowledge this viewpoint. Not only must we see youth as legitimate social and political actors, but we must also recognize them as potential innovators and drivers of new media change. (p. vii)

Conceptualizing digital media as tools for creative expression, spaces for young people to voice dissent and technologies that support coalition building among youth, scholars have drawn on critical traditions and provided examples of how digital media help disrupt youth-adult power relations and support the unification and mobilization of groups of young people who have been historically disenfranchised because of their race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Young people's digital media practices and organizing efforts often happen in partnership with supportive adults in school-based programs and out-of -school settings. For example, Shelley Goldman, Angela Booker, and Meghan McDermott (2008) provide examples of how adults can support young people in gaining access to both digital media: through a community based media arts program and student representation on a local school board. In both of these instances, young people were aided by adults in using technology to be "influential" in their communities (Goldman, Booker, and McDermott, 2008, p. 185).

Hip hop studies also emphasize the ways that primarily black youth engage in a shared language with popular culture and digital media to be critical of inequities and racism in their lives. Samy Alim (2011) characterizes young people who engage in politically-conscious and anti-racist hip hop practices as highly skilled and literate, and the practices that emerge from hip hop as "intimate, lived and liberatory (ILL)" because young people can be creative in adopting consumer discourses and twisting them to support critical and liberatory agendas. Hip hop serves as a creative avenue and contributes to spaces where young people can reflect critically on their engagement with media platforms, content, and the cultural worlds they live in.

Increasing access to digital media augments these practices and can help young people link their artistic expression to civic life and political engagement. In "Hip Hop 2.0*,"* Raiford Guins (2008) provides an example of how digital media afford tools and spaces for young people

to come together and create politically conscious artistic expressions. He argues that politically conscious hip hop labels and websites provide an "inroad to civic life and political awareness" (p. 65) for young people by linking their artistic expression through hip-hop with increased political consciousness about racism. Such websites serve "as cultural form, commercial culture, educational site, political, and politicizing force" that unify and mobilize young people to combat racism (p. 65).

Chela Sandoval and Guisela Latorre (2008) provide an example of how young people engage with digital media amidst the formation of politicized ethnic identities. They consider how digital media support Chicano/a youth artists' creation of not only art and music, but also community and political activism through the creation of "large-scale digitally generated murals, educational DVDs, animations, community archives, and digital art" (p. 81). They propose that digital media are an important resource for "digital *arti*vism:" a combination of digital media production and youth artistry into young people's needs and desires in order to advance a liberatory consciousness that is central in Chicano/a activism.

Digital media also serve as important tools that help young people organize and build coalitions to generate political momentum. Makram Khoury-Machool (2007) describes how Palestinian college students and professors leveraged the internet to circumvent barriers that prevented them from reaching campus and to organize amongst themselves and other community members. The internet in this example served as a tool for peaceful political resistance and an important organizing tool.

In the United States, digital media have contributed to political organizing of young people who have been marginalized in higher education because they lack documentation for legal residency. Young people were mobilized through the creation of email lists, digital stories,

websites and Facebook groups (VOICE, 2011). This organizing led to attendance at legislative hearings to support lobbying efforts related to the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act: a piece of federal legislation that would create a path to citizenship and improve access to higher education for undocumented students (HEAA, 2011).

Anxieties: Privacy, Surveillance, Consumerism, Vulnerabilities

Scholars have documented ways that digital media operate in less empowering ways in the lives of young people. Most online spaces are designed by adults, and many are operated by commercial and corporate interests. While young people seek out spaces that are less-obviously mediated by adults and exhibit creativity and counter narratives to corporate agendas, the end result of youth-generated content is still being constrained by the design of these digital platforms (Livingstone, 2008). The pervasive consumer and corporate control of digital platforms raises concerns among some scholars, including TaraMcPherson (2008). She writes:

> What role might libraries, schools, electronic commons, and other places have in creating public environments where youth might create, explore, and connect in ways that don't always circulate back into markets? What spaces and experiences might be provided that allow youth to think of themselves as citizens as much as consumers? (p. 13)

The pervasiveness of corporate interests and consumer practices that exist alongside community-building, self-expression and the formation of new and vibrant digital (youthful) publics creates a tension between hopeful possibilities for youth democratic practices and corporate agendas.

Rebekah Willet (2008) provides one example of how these corporate agendas make young women especially vulnerable online. She documents the sophisticated marketing that targets girls and women online and promotes consumerism as an avenue for women's self-

realization. McPherson and Willett rightfully remind us that the "most engaging forms of self-expression for youth are often tightly wedded to commercial enterprises and consumer products" (McPherson, p. 11).

Privacy and Surveillance on Facebook

Facebook creates both opportunities and dilemmas for young people because the site provides spaces for self-expression that are bounded within a corporate platform. This tension results in ongoing potential for young people to gain social and political momentum while exposing them to new forms of surveillance and privacy concerns.

The disclosure of personal information on Facebook and visibility of activity to others have raised concerns about surveillance and privacy. Daniel Trottier (2012) explains that individuals' visibility on Facebook leads users to feel personally responsible for their reputation and aware of how they maintain their online presence. Features of "networked publics" like Facebook present new challenges for privacy because of the durability of digitally recorded communication, searchability of people and texts, replicability of information, and the presence of invisible audiences who can view exchanges without the author's awareness of them (boyd, 2008a).

The accessibility and visibility of users' information is increased on Facebook by certain features, like the Newsfeed, that help broadcast individual posts (boyd, 2008b). The collection of large amounts of personal information by Facebook on its servers, commercial interests of advertisers on the site and changing privacy policies have also precipitated a range of legal and ethical concerns about Facebook users' rights and Facebook's responsibilities in protecting the information and individuals who use the site (Podder, Mosteller, and Scholder, 2009).

Facebook blurs boundaries between public and private spheres in students' everyday lives by consolidating multiple social networks into one "friend" network. Students might find that the information they share is simultaneously visible to teachers, employers, parents, friends, acquaintances, and depending on their privacy settings, the general public. The visibility of personal information on a semi-public site has fueled legal challenges and user backlash, which led to greater transparency in Facebook's privacy policies (boyd, 2008b).

The young women in this study were aware of the visibility and persistence of their digital posts. Like most of their peers, however, they continued to use the site while monitoring the type of information they shared and updating their privacy settings. They were most concerned about the surveillance Trottier (2012) describes, and consequently took personal responsibility for the types of profiles they created and how these profiles contributed to their reputation as good students.

Youth, Digital Media, and Education

Rethinking Learning and Literacies

Education researchers have also considered how digital media are shifting youth cultural practices in ways that influence the context of formal schooling. One important line of inquiry is about the ways that digital media contribute to new literacies among young people in formal and informal educational settings. These new literacies are inspiring scholars to reconsider what literacy means and how out-of-school literacy practices might inform formal schooling.

Recent forms of media and technology provide opportunities for new forms of expression. The digital medium can shift the sensation and experience of their participation. In her synthesis of research for the MacArthur series on *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected,* Tara McPherson (2008) underscores that digital media lend their use to "particular

pleasures and possibilities" as a result of the malleability of digital codes like html. She notes the ways that digital media have also precipitated "a privileging of process over product, a sensation of mobility and control, a feeling of networked sociality, mutability and transformation" (p. 10).

The incorporation of digital media into social relationships shifts communication patterns in young people's everyday lives. For example, in "The Medium is the Metamessage," Deborah Tannen (2013) investigated college students' text messages and found that young people alter how they communicate in various media platforms as they draw on a range of linguistic resources. The college students she studied calibrated their textual communication based on the digital medium they were using. For example, the women she studied were more likely than men to use "enthusiasm markers" like emoticons, syllable repetition and exclamation points (p. 104) in their text messages and expect certain timing of responses based on the type of message being communicated. The students also carefully considered the medium through which they communicated (for example a phone call, text message, email, Facebook post or message) because it served as an important indication of the formality and importance of their message. Digital media influenced communication practices by affording multiple channels of communication through which young people understood that the "medium" also served as a "metamessage."

Digital media practices among young people are shaping the context for formal education and are valued as a source of inspiration to reconsider what literacy and classroom instruction could involve. The field of New Literacies emphasizes the ways that digital media are shifting literacy practices in and out of school by providing new audio, visual and textual tools. This has led to a redefinition of what counts as "literacy." For example, Donna Alvermann (2010) defines

new literacy practices as including "performative, visual, aural and semiotic understandings necessary for constructing and reconstructing print- and nonprint-based texts (p. viii)." Gunther Kress (2003) defines the expansion of literacy to include multimodel (audio, video, textual) representations that fundamentally shift literacy practices and meaning making by making new genres and practices possible. Likewise, Sonia Livingstone (2008) conceptualizes digital literacy as being shaped by the convergence of different spheres of public and private lives, including "work and leisure, education and home, information and entertainment" (p. 115).

Henry Jenkins' (2006) concepts of "participatory" and "convergence" cultures provide helpful examples of the fluidity and sensations that have emerged because of the ways that digital media allow users to "iterate and revise" (McPherson, 2008, p.10). According to Jenkins, digital media have facilitated a participatory culture of online forums, communities, memberships and social networks where people can create new genres of content by remixing or expanding one or another set sources of media (for example, remixing music). These same technologies support new forms of collaboration and collective knowledge in sites like Wikipedia, an open-source encyclopedia. Jenkins argues that a "convergence culture" has emerged from the "flow of content" generated by media conglomerates and individuals "across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins, June 19, 2006, henryjenkin.org). This convergence of content is both accessible and transmittable by multiple types of devices and users.

These new literacies with digital media have led education scholars to consider which aspects of these literacy practices should and can be taught in schools as well as identifying key features of digital literacy practices. For example, based on research of young people's use of digital media, David Buckingham (2008) sees the educator's role as focusing "not so much *how young people learn* with technology, but *what they need to know about it"* (p. 17). These critical

literacy practices suggest that educators can help their students learn how to negotiate new configurations of public and private; complicated relationships between authorship, viewership and replication; and innovations and diversity in the use of visual, audio and linguistic resources (Mahari, 2001).

Education researchers also consider the ways that youth involvement with digital media can be a resource for classroom instruction. For example, Glenda Hull (2003) argues that digital media ought to be seen as a resource in classrooms (Hull, 2003), and many other researchers have offered ideas about how teachers can tap into informal youth media practices as a teaching resource to engage students in meaningful learning opportunities (Hooper, P., 2008; Irizarry, 2009; Ito et al., 2010; Moje, 2002; Sirc, 2009). Likewise, a few scholars have inquired as to how youth practices and literacy practices related to Facebook might inform teaching practices. These applications include establishing closed groups as safe spaces for students to practice writing (Reid, J., 2011), drawing on literacy practices in social media to teach literacy (Burnett and Merchant, 2011; Kaufer, Gunawardena, Tan, and Cheek, 2011) and art (Sweeny, 2009).

Digital Divides in Education

Understanding youth cultural practices and young people's responses to educational institutions have been important areas of scholarship in anthropology and the sociology of education. For example, Willis's *Learning to Labor* (1982) revealed how the strategies young male students invoked to resist formal schooling contributed to their reproduction as working class adults. Likewise, Holland and Eisenhart's *Educated in Romance* (1990) demonstrated how university women produced a peer system of romance that reproduced patriarchy and gender differences, and influenced the types of majors, degrees and careers women entered. The

widespread adoption of digital media among young people offers yet another lens for understanding the relationship between youth cultural production and social reproduction in education.

Young people's productive uses of digital media include the development of new literacy practices drawing on the participatory and multimodal aspects of digital media platforms; and the incorporation of digital media to extend peer networks, negotiate social interactions, and mobilize political action. Yet education scholars continue to raise concerns about "digital divides:" differences in physical access to digital media and of knowledge of information technology that are related to race, class, and gender.

There is some evidence that mobile phones, personal computers, the internet and Web 2.0 practices have become so pervasive among youth, including low-income and youth of color, that there is reason for guarded optimism that that differences in physical access are now small or non-existent (Byrne, 2008; Watkins, 2011). However, access to technology and digital media continues to be uneven when it comes to opportunities to learn advanced skills such as computer programming and related skills in schools.

For example, in *Stuck in the Shallow End*, Jane Margolis (2008) documents the ways that low-income students and students of color are shut out of opportunities to learn about information technology, and shows how access to internet connections and cutting edge technology follow the contours of unequal distribution of community resources and school funding. Where schools in wealthier districts often provide courses in computer programming and the prerequisites for college entrance in these fields, students in urban and lower-income areas rarely have access to such opportunities.

This is an important distinction, Tyrone Taborn (2008) explains, because everyday access to digital media does not lead to comparable academic, educational or professional opportunities: "saying that the Digital Divide is closing because minorities have greater access to computers is like saying minorities have a stake in the automobile industry because they drive cars" (p. 39). For Margolis and Taborn, access to computers and the internet without access to computer programming skills, high-skilled jobs, mentorship, and full participation in the high-tech economy suggests an ongoing and troubling replication of a social and economic divide that is influenced by schooling in definitive and persistent ways.

Facebook and Digital Divides

In the United States, Facebook is also playing a role in the reproduction of less obvious yet pervasive digital divides. Ester Hargittai's (2008) examination of patterns of use of different social media sites revealed correlations between race and socioeconomics and the types of social media sites young people joined. Hargittai demonstrates that the social media sites young people used varied by race and social class. These variations in usage patterns showed that social network participation references young people's existing social networks. Adoption patterns in social media sites influence the types of social relationships young people might experience online: for example, college-going youth are more likely to participate in college-oriented networks. In the case of Facebook, users were more likely to be young adults, White or Asian and whose parents had college degrees. Hispanic students were less likely to use Facebook and more likely to use other social network sites like MySpace. Not only were young people communicating with their known social ties, their choice of social media site was also correlated with race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. danah boyd's (2011) found a similar tendeny:

among secondary students, MySpace users: was characterized as "ghetto" as students shifted their social network site membership to Facebook.

These examples indicate that there is much more to be learned about the ways that social media sites like Facebook serve not only as a tool for the organizing of young people around shared political and social issues, but as a filter that delimits which social networks young people might engage with online. The ways that the young women in this dissertation study have incorporated digital media into their everyday lives offer an important perspective on the types of information, identities and networks that Facebook privileges.

Ethnography and Digital Anthropology

These initial studies about Facebook reveal some of the covert ways that social media organize youth according to racialized categories and socio-economics. Yet there is little research that has explored how the design and function of social media sites contributes to differential distributions of social and cultural capital among young people. This is due, in part, to the recent historical development of social media sites in the last decade. Much of this research has necessarily focused on early adopters of the technology, including college students, and done little to address differences in use among students, including non-users, or how Facebook extends patterns of racialization, socioeconomic and gendering among college-age youth. Early scholarship about Facebook has addressed how it originated as a social media site for college students, the types of information that users generally share, some of the concerns about privacy that arise from surveillance among users, the commercial features of the platform, and differences in usage patterns.

Most of this research about Facebook, especially with respect to education, has been conducted through self-report surveys about use and analysis of Facebook from small groups of individuals who use the site. Researchers have relied on surveys asking respondents about their use of digital media, conducted "off-line" observations of use, or supplemented interactions on the site with a set of interviews. In most cases, these researchers did not know their participants personally, did not know much about their offline lives, and did not follow them over time.

However, studies that have taken an ethnographic approach, where researchers engage in longer participant-observation that considers both participation on Facebook and how Facebook functions in participants' lives, provide a richer and more complete picture of Facebook adoption and use. In the 2010 *Annual Review in Anthropology*, Gabriella Coleman concludes her review of ethnographic research about digital media by noting that the strength of ethnographic approaches to the study of digital media is that it overcomes "faulty and narrow presumptions" by drawing attention to the particular roles digital media play in people's lives (pp. 497-498). Moreover, boyd and Ellison (2008) note that the benefit of ethnographic approaches is to generate an understanding of the long-term implications of social networking sites (p. 224).

Tom Boellstorff (2012) summarizes the application of ethnographic methods to virtual practices as "digital anthropology." He defines this growing body of research as an approach to studying virtual worlds that "permits addressing that object of study in its own terms (in other words, not as merely derivative of the offline), while keeping in focus how those terms always involve the direct and indirect ways online sociality points at the physical world and vice versa" (p. 40).

Boellstorff proposes two core principles for digital anthropology. First, digital anthropology must address the "indexicality" of the virtual to build strong connections to the

context of use. Second, digital anthropology requires participant observation in order for researchers to gain "insight into practices and meanings as they unfold," "become known to a community" and "understand differences in what people say and what they do" (p. 55).

In "Tracing the Everyday 'Sitings' of Adolescents on the Internet: a strategic adaptation of ethnography across online and offline spaces," Leander and McKim (2011) propose designing "connective ethnography:" ethnography that traces the "flow of texts" (p. 227), performance of place in youth literacy practices, and "discursive construction of selves" (p. 235) in young people's lives. By focusing analytical attention on the production of space, time, place, and self in digital media, research about youth and digital media can "disrupt online-offline binaries," "account for the ways in which multiple-space times are invoked, produced …and coordinated in activity," and emphasize the "situatedness" of literacy practices (pp. 224-225).

Ethnographic approaches allow for the contextualization of digitally-mediated practices and greater precision in indexing virtual participation with respect to cultural practices. In the next chapter, I elaborate anthropological theorizations of cultural worlds and the interplay between cultural practices, identity formation and cultural artifacts as representational technologies. Then, I outline my methodological approach as I engaged in long-term participant observation via Facebook, conducted analysis of Facebook profiles of participants, and situated these digitally-mediated profiles within a larger ethnography about educational pathways.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) Dorothy Holland, William Lachicotte Jr., Debra Skinner and Carole Cain put forth a substantial theory to conceptualize and understand youth responses to their cultural worlds. In particular, their theory elaborates the relationship between cultural processes and identity development and sets the stage for understanding digital media as cultural artifacts.

In this chapter, I discuss the key elements of Holland's (et al.) theory and how it informed my analysis of youth culture and digital media. I supplement this discussion with examples of how other scholars have used Holland's (et al.) idea of culturally "figured worlds" in educational settings. I am specifically interested in how they have formulated the concept of cultural artifacts as tools that mark or call out identities in terms of figured worlds and as pivots that mediate individual participation in figured worlds. These theoretical developments guided my analysis of salient cultural worlds for the women in FREE Pathways and the role of digital media—Facebook in particular—as salient artifacts in the formation of their identities after high school. In adopting this theoretical framework, I underscore the importance of situating Facebook in the cultural and social contexts of its use.

Culture and Identity

Figured Worlds

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998), Holland and her colleagues introduce the concept of "figured worlds." They define figured worlds as socially and culturally constructed realms of interpretation in which particular actors are recognized, certain acts judged

significant, and specific trajectories and outcomes valued (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Figured worlds circulate as ideological arenas for orchestrating identities and actions in both explicitly and implicitly structured contexts. Holland et al. suggest thinking of figured worlds as socially and culturally produced "activities" rather than "things or objects to be apprehended,…[as activities] which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect them" (p. 41).

Embracing the tension between "humans as social producers and as social products" (p. 43), Holland et al. also suggest that people draw on figured worlds to think about and conjure identities. This conjuring is possible because identities have a figurative dimension: they have their source and are marked in an imaginative system. But people are not free to enact identities unchecked because identities also have a relational dimension based on one's positioning ("positional identity") in social status hierarchies: "Positional identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground [often unmarked] relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance…of the lived world" (Holland et al., 1998, p.127).

People may not be able to affect the way they are positioned, but they must "answer" or respond to that positioning in some way; this answering is referred to by Holland et al. as a "space of authoring" (after Bakhtin). Although answers must be given, they are not predetermined, so the space of authoring is somewhat open-ended and can include individual variations and improvisations, some of which may be taken up by others and stabilized into new "figured worlds of possibility" that sometimes lead to social or personal changes (Holland et al,. 1998; Urrieta, 2007).

Holland et al. posit that one such outcome of participation in figured worlds is the "formation of motivation," or the creation of desires as individuals engage in cultural practices. For example, despite the social positioning of the women in FREE Pathways as students of color

and lower-income status, they deeply desired college degrees and professional careers motivated, at least in part, by their designation as "good students" in the figured world of schooling at their high schools (Eisenhart, 2011).

Figured Worlds in Education

A few education researchers have used Holland's (et al.) theory to investigate figured worlds, identity, and positionality in schools and classrooms. These ethnographic studies have illustrated how teachers constitute "figured worlds" that mediate student identities in their use of discourses about learning, artifacts like textbooks, and teacher pedagogies (Boaler and Greeno, 2000; Leander, 2002). For example, Beth Rubin (2007) documented a high school classroom where the teacher's use of demeaning discourses and rote assignments constructed a figured world that positioned almost all the students as incompetent learners.

In contrast, a study of a bilingual school where teachers encouraged use of Spanish as part of a narrative of school success created a figured world where students often categorized as at-risk produced identities as successful students (Michael, Andrade, and Bartlett, 2007). In another study, Lilia Monzó and Robert Rueda found that a group of bilingual immigrant children masked their language proficiency out of awareness of the privileging of English in the figured world of success their school and the corresponding devaluation of their social status as English language learners (2009).

Attention to positioning in school has been a rich area of inquiry, as it has highlighted identity shifts with implications for learning. With respect to teacher education, Luis Urrieta (2007b) studied a group of Mexican-American educators and witnessed how their increasing engagement with a figured world of social justice transformed identities from professional teachers to Chicana activists. Likewise, Susan Jurow (2005) showed how the creation of an

alternate figured world for learning about math allowed students opportunities to reposition themselves as successful learners.

For women in the FREE Pathways study, the figured world of schooling and their positioning as "good students" shaped their motivation to pursue college degrees. After high school graduation, however, their engagement with formal education shifted as they moved into private colleges, public universities, community colleges, or were not enrolled in school. These changing circumstances influenced new understandings the young women were developing about the terms of the figured world of schooling they understood. In this transition to college life and adulthood, I wondered how Facebook might mediate their access to information about higher education, their participation in educational pathways, and their social positioning with respect to a figured world of school.

Cultural Artifacts

Cultural artifacts are an important dimension of figured worlds: they connect people to particular figured worlds and serve as tools for individuals to index and improvise meanings in ways that "evoke the worlds to which they were relevant, and position individuals [including themselves] with respect to those worlds" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 63). Holland et al. provide examples of artifacts which mediate participation both in material and conceptual forms. Material artifacts might be items such as poker chips for Alcoholics Anonymous members (the presence of the chip signals how long someone has been sober), clothing for college women (wearing certain fashions signal social status among peers), or grades in school (the grade signals completion of assignments and learning). Conceptual artifacts can be discourses or semiotic categories such as psychiatric diagnoses for patients (which transform a person into a mental

patient) or labels like "good students" (which distinguish successful participants from others in school).

Cultural artifacts mediate people's participation in cultural worlds because they serve as pivots that give people access to certain worlds or signal their identities with respect to those worlds. To illustrate the central role that artifacts play in conjuring figured worlds, Holland et al. refer to Vygotsky's descriptions of children's play. Vygotsky paid special attention to the ways that children used "tangible objects" to enter play worlds. For example, by assigning a stick the status of a horse, they are able to enter play worlds. Similarly, artifacts help people shift their frames of reference to particular figured worlds and to form their responses to these cultural realms (p. 50). Artifacts, in conceptual, discursive, and tangible material forms, help shift the "perceptual, cognitive, affective and practical frame of activity" (p. 63) by helping abstract ideas and ideologies gain traction in people's everyday lives.

Cultural Artifacts in Educational Settings

Education researchers have adopted Holland's (et al.) conceptualization of cultural artifacts in figured worlds to consider the ways that artifacts mediate student and teachers' engagement and social positioning in education settings. In work with a group of high school students, Beth Hatt (2007) explored how young people negotiated and challenged a figured world of "smartness" they experienced in school. Students understood that some of the material artifacts associated with school completion, like good grades and diplomas, were used to define what success meant. While students recognized the force of these artifacts in creating a particular definition of success that privileged "book smarts," the students also provided their own definitions of success that referenced a separate conceptual category: "street smarts." Their success in other parts of their lives depended on their the ability to maneuver through the

structures in their lives such as poverty, the police, street culture, and abusive "others" to protect themselves, their rights and their property (p. 154).

Cultural artifacts from educational settings can also mediate students' social positioning in educational settings and other areas of their lives. Lesley Bartlett's (2007) work underscores the importance of material artifacts in mediating literacy students' identities in relation to education and in shifting their claims to certain positional identities. Bartlett studied a Freirean literacy program in Brazil. In this context, where being a literate "educated person" was valued, her students carried books and pencils to signal to other students, family members and community members that they were literate. They wore clothing with the school logo on it when they rode on public buses or visited public spaces (like the city center) because it made them feel like they belonged in these spaces. Their enrollment in the literacy program served as a conceptual artifact that helped them achieve more desirable positional identities outside of the program.

Material and conceptual artifacts can also collude to reinforce the development and stabilization of positional identities. Kevin Leander (2002) investigated the construction of young people's identities in peer interactions in a U.S. high school classroom. He illustrates how students used conceptual labels about "acting black" to describe one young woman as "ghetto." These discourses were reinforced by their references to a banner in the classroom that listed both positive and negative descriptions of "the Black community" (students generated these categories in a lesson about stereotypes). Students would turn to the banner as a reference for the categories they were using in conversations, indexing the young woman's gestures, language, and stories to position their female African-American classmate as "ghetto." The banner and conversations created a classroom space where the young women's "ghetto" identity could be

recognized by peers and reinforced. The material and discursive artifacts helped stabilize the social category, "ghetto," as real, and then subsequently to align the woman with the category.

Facebook as Cultural Artifact

Facebook profiles also contribute to the stabilization of certain kinds of knowledge, categories and social positioning. The social media site facilitates communication between young people and their social networks, while at the same time inscribing this information onto a digital record of communication between users on wall, information and group pages. These profiles then serve to represent individuals on the site in ways that they can be referenced in comparison to other individuals' pages. Like the previous examples about artifacts in educational settings, Facebook helps delineate social categories and reinforce an individual's social positioning with respect to these categories.

The personal information the women share on their Facebook profiles displayed certain kinds of social and cultural capital as the women presented themselves within the platform's structured categories. These displays of information often were attempts by the women to present themselves as successful in different arenas of their lives (participating in a romantic relationship, being awarded a scholarship, having close relationships with family members). Their profiles also indexed their social positioning within higher education (as a college student, first-generation student or minority student), and helped stabilize social categories that the women may or may not be included in (as a college student or not).

As they communicated on Facebook, the social network site functioned as an artifact that mediated their engagement in cultural practices among known social ties, especially high school friends, family and college networks. Because it mediated ongoing communication between social ties and stabilized this information into a digital record, it functioned like "a container"

that stored and transformed its contents (Sterne, 2006). Information about the women moved through Facebook in particular ways because the platform design filtered the types of information that could be shared and stored on the site.

Creating 'Node' in Youth Networks

In *Knowledge in Motion* (1994), Jan Nespor illustrates how artifacts help organize individuals' participation in social structures where "knowledge practice" takes place with "others distant in time and space" (p. 9). Nespor theorizes that representational technologies (or cultural artifacts)—such as textbooks, algorithms, and accepted theories—organize space, time and identities in a college physics program. For example, when undergraduate physics students congregated in a hallway to study for exams, they referred to textbooks, class notes, and lectures. These artifacts from their coursework transformed the hallway into a space for doing physics and the individuals into undergraduate physics students. As students moved between classes and spaces in the physics building and progressed over time towards graduation, artifacts, like textbooks or class notes, defined certain times and spaces as connected to disciplinary practices in physics. Nespor describes these moments where artifacts helped define spaces and position student with respect to a disciplinary practice (in this case, physics) as nodes in socially-constructed actor-networks.

Cultural artifacts can also be deployed by individuals to construct identities, invoke social status and explain their life experiences in school settings. In his ethnography of a primary school, *Tangled Up in School* (1996), Nespor considers how elementary school students drew on artifacts from television, video games, and movies in their conversations with each other. For example, boys brought trading cards to school and talked about their favorite characters in

television shows to position themselves as strong, knowledgeable and popular. The girls also compared each other and boys to less desirable television characters to insult and tease each other. Popular culture was a source of information and knowledge that the young people could draw on to signal meaningful social categories and claim certain social positions among each other.

As the young women shared information about their educational, family, work and life experiences, they drew on funds of knowledge from multiple figured worlds in their lives. Their posts appeared in chronological order and were enhanced with hyperlinks and visual displays (photographs, other web content). They were deployed on a dynamic digital platform where their social ties could view and react to what they shared. These artifacts were also imbued with meaning from some of the salient cultural worlds in their lives. For example, posts about school or photographs of their family conjured the terms of figured worlds of school and family, and their participation in those worlds. Their deployment of artifacts from these cultural realms on Facebook profiles produced particular spaces and times in their educational pathways. Consequently, Facebook functioned as a "node" (a space-time) for their participation in and responses to the multiple and overlapping worlds of schooling, family, and peers.

Stabilization of Memory and Youth Knowledge

As an information technology, Facebook mediates the flow, access and distribution of knowledge among youth. To understand how Facebook does this, it is necessary to shift the unit of analysis of cognition and knowledge from the "individual mind" to "a culturally constituted functional group" (Hutchins and Klausen, 1996). This conceptual shift highlights how information moves at a group level.

Edwin Hutchins' conceptualization of "distributed cognition" considers knowledge as distributed across networks of people rather than contained solely in the minds of individuals (1995). To illustrate how cognition can be distributed across a group of individuals, he analyzed the work of navigators on a U.S. Navy ship (1995) and pilots in an airline cockpit (Hutchins and Klausen, 1996). Through careful analysis of transcripts and ethnographic awareness of the context of exchanges, he demonstrated that successful navigation of the ship and piloting of a commercial airliner required the coordination of information between individuals and the transformation of knowledge across a range of representational states (no one individual possessed the necessary knowledge to fly the plane on his own). These representational states included spoken words, actions, written notes, and technological displays.

In the case of the airline pilots, Hutchins and Klausen (1996) analyze some of the important features of distributed cognition as a team of pilots coordinate their activities and communication to successfully simulate a commercial airline flight. The team of pilots was able to engage in efficient communication because they share a common understanding of the procedures necessary to fly the commercial plane, including their assigned duties and communication practices with air traffic controllers. As the pilots processed the flow of flight information, they engaged in a collective process that regulated how cognition was distributed. For example, each pilot had a different duty on the flight and responsibility for certain kinds of information, which resulted in a distribution of information between individual pilots. The pilots also verbalized what they were doing and watched each other's actions so that there was a redundancy of information storage. Because they all heard the same commands from air traffic controllers and knew what each other was doing, this redundancy of information storage reinforced their shared understanding about how the flight was progressing (pp.25-26).

As the pilots worked together to fly the airplane, representations and material artifacts were important mediators in their distributed cognition. Information traveled through a variety of representational states and media, including spoken words, memories, actions, and notes on paper. In this flow of distributed information, material representations of information (like navigation charts for ship navigators or altitude alert systems for pilots) stabilized information that might otherwise have remained in less persistent vocal and kinetic states.

With respect to youth cultural practices and Facebook, this approach draws attention to the importance of investigating how Facebook mediates collective knowledge and distributed cognition among the young people who use the site. What might otherwise be passing moments of notes passed in class, whispers over the phone and teasing in the locker-room are now inscribed in the digital record of social media and texting platforms. In a system of distributed cognition, Facebook might be serving to stabilize knowledge among young people by shifting information from more transient states to a more persistent (albeit not necessarily permanent) and public digital formats.

Research Questions

Returning to the educational pathways of FREE Pathways women and their use of Facebook, the following questions about figured worlds and Facebook guided my inquiry:

> How do high achieving women of color, who are also lower-income, understand, navigate and respond to culturally figured worlds of school, family and romance as they move from being successful high school students into the next phase of their lives?

> How does Facebook mediate their participation in cultural worlds and social positioning?

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN

Female Recruits Explore Engineering Studies

Female Recruits Explore Engineering (FREE)

The study reported in this dissertation took place in 2010-2012 and is based on an earlier study, Female Recruits Explore Engineering (FREE). From 2007-2010, sixty-eight young women who were sophomores in urban Denver high schools participated in an ethnographic study and outreach project supported by the National Science Foundation.[1] The Female Recruits Explore Engineering project focused on young women of color from low and lower-middle-income families—young women with high school records of achievement in mathematics and science that suggested they could become successful as engineers. The outreach portion of FREE was an after-school program intended to encourage interest in engineering among these academically-talented (top 20% of their class in math or science) young women who were not already considering engineering as a field of study or career.[2]

The FREE project addressed 6 main research questions. For Years 1-3 (when the girls were high school 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, respectively):

1. What are the effects of engineering career exploration on high-achieving, mostly minority high school girls who are not already interested in engineering?
2. For these girls, what is important to know about engineering?
3. How do the girls' interest and engagement in engineering change over time?

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[1] The FREE project was supported by NSF HRD 0624537 to Dr. Margaret Eisenhart at the University of Colorado, Boulder. The results reported here are the sole responsibility of the author.

[2] FREE was undertaken in three states simultaneously, but this article focuses on the sites in Colorado only.

4. How do racial/ethnic, socio-economic, and rural/urban differences affect the engagement in engineering?

For Year 4 (when the girls were college freshmen):

5. What obstacles and supports exist for young women who pursue engineering in college?

6. What is the role of significant others, especially peers and family, in influencing persistence in engineering?

To study FREE, multiple methods of data collection were used to track the young women's experiences and to learn about the course of their lives during their time in FREE: participant observation to record what happened during the monthly meetings and other visits with the young women and their families; interview questions posted on a website for all the young women to respond to; face-to-face interviews with nine case study participants and family members; 18 months of texting data from Blackberry smartphones the young women received as an incentive to participate in the study; and surveys about the young women's previous experiences with engineering and technologies, school performance, future plans, and social networks. The young women's website postings and BlackBerry PIN and chat messages were saved to a secure server.[3]

In the spring of 2009, as high school graduation neared, the young women began to consider seriously their prospects for college matriculation. Following graduation, most of the remaining 38 participants went on to enroll in college, but only a very few (n=3) as engineering students. Others faced significant financial, cultural and political barriers in accessing first college and then engineering.[4]

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[3] BlackBerry data was collected with participants and their parents' permission.
[4] For more information about the FREE project, see www.xploreengineering.org

FREE Pathways

With additional funding, FREE researchers invited the young women who had participated in FREE through high school graduation to be part of a new study. The new study began in 2010 with twenty-four participants who agreed to continue their participation through their anticipated completion of college in 2013; the new study is referred to as FREE Pathways. FREE Pathways was designed to examine in detail the role of social, cultural, and economic capital in the educational pathways of FREE women after high school graduation. The primary research question for the proposed study was:

1. How does social, cultural, and economic capital brought to college and social, cultural, and economic capital used in college affect young women's persistence in STEM vs. non-STEM pathways in college?

Sub-questions required to answer the primary question were:

2. What social, cultural, and economic capital did the young women bring to college?
3. How does social, cultural, and economic capital brought to college affect women's persistence in STEM vs. non-STEM fields?
4. What educational/career pathways do the women pursue in college?
5. How does social, cultural, and economic capital brought to college affect women's college pathways?
6. How do women use social, cultural, and economic capital in college?
7. How does women's use of social, cultural, and economic capital in college affect their pathways in STEM and non-STEM fields?
8. How does young women's use of social, cultural, and economic capital in college affect their persistence in STEM?

Data Collection

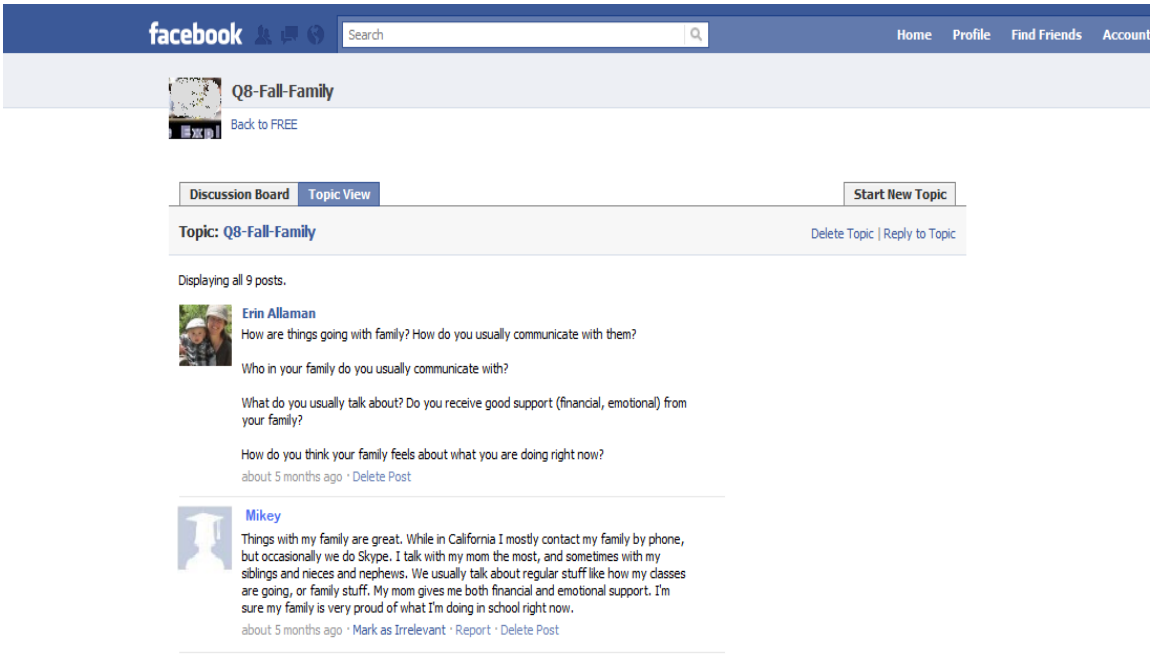
As a research assistant with FREE Pathways, I was involved with data collection and analysis beginning in 2010. From the beginning of my involvement in the FREE Pathways study, digital media played an important role in mediating my relationship with participants. For example, I first met the FREE Pathways women through archives of BlackBerry text messages that were collected during their high school years (Eisenhart and Allaman, in preparation). Then, I was introduced to participants via Facebook by Dr. Margaret Eisenhart in August of 2010 to begin data collection for the continuing project. Then, from 2010-2012, I met the FREE Pathways women in person for interviews at the end of each semester. Facebook served as an important channel for ongoing communication through weekly group discussion boards, messages and viewing of wall pages. Facebook provided me a lens into their lives, which were unfolding in locations around Colorado and at other out-of-state colleges and universities.

As a research assistant, I collected data from three main components of Facebook: group pages, information pages and wall pages.[5] Group pages were created so that women from each of the three original high schools could respond to weekly questions I posted on behalf of the FREE Pathways study. The responses could only be seen by other members of the group. For example, when graduates of one high school, Aspire, responded on their group page, only other members of the page could see what they posted. Figure 1 below shows an example of a post from Mikey on one of the discussion topics. Over the course of the year, twenty-six topics were posted on each of the three school pages (for Aspire, Southside and Chavez High Schools).

[5] At the time of writing, using Facebook as a data source was an emerging approach to ethnographic and educational research: this data collection was approved by the University of Colorado's Institutional Research Board, and participants signed consent forms to allow researchers to collect data that can be viewed by friends of their Facebook account. This data collection was permitted by Facebook's Terms of Use that allows for collection of information provided that users have given their consent to researchers.

Figure 1

Sample group page



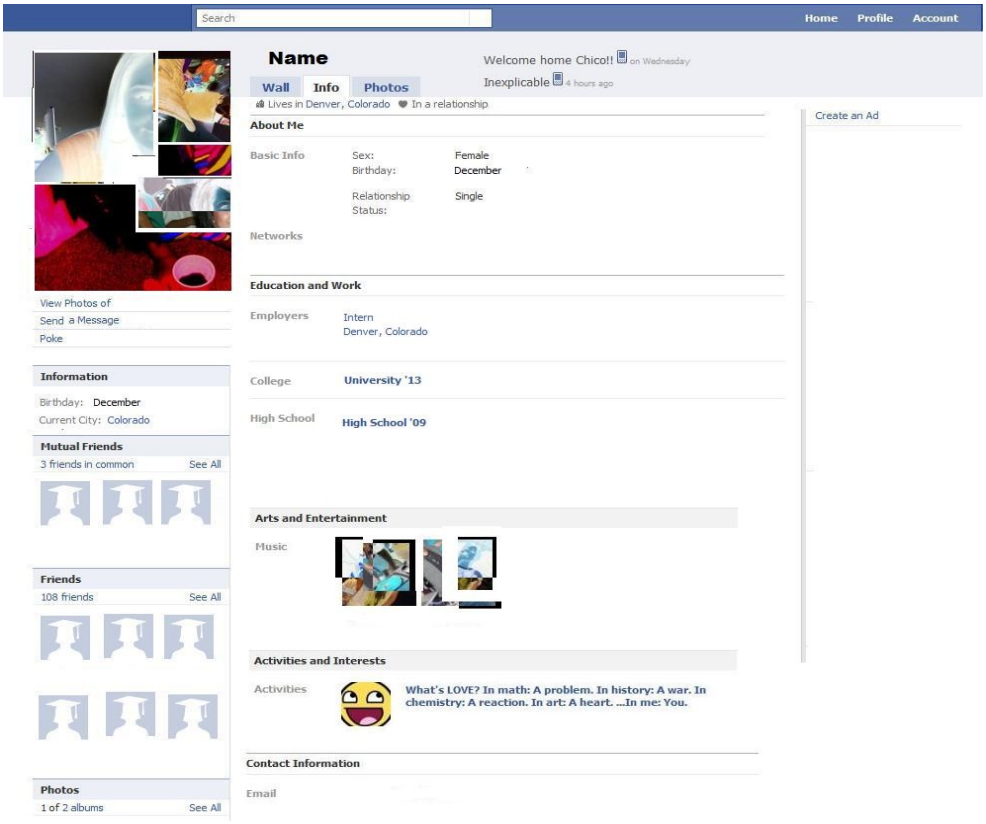
(Aspire group page, May 4, 2011)

Information pages offered a profile of the individual user and were visible to anyone the girls "friended" or gave permission to see their Facebook profile. All of the young women displayed a profile photograph, and gave basic information about themselves like where they went to high school, the year of their high school graduation, and musicians or television shows they liked.

Figure 2 shows a composite information page to illustrate the general layout and content categories. Information pages were saved every month for each participant. Because the pages rarely changed, three or four pages for each of the seventeen participants were converted to word files for further analysis.

Figure 2

Composite information page



Facebook wall pages were much more complex, and the amount of content exceeded three hundred pages of digital text per year for some participants. Wall pages provided a substantial source of information; they accounted for over ninety percent of the Facebook data: there were 8,841 quoted passages in 34 wall pages compared to 332 quotations in information pages and 598 quotations in group pages.

In their wall posts, the young women wrote in a rich compilation of multiple codes and language, and these practices were a rich source of data about the ways that the young women crafted narratives about themselves and their lives. Figure 3 shows a composite page with the running list of actions, like playing games, as well as posts by participants and their friends. Facebook walls were saved as a cumulative document for each school semester.

Figure 3

Composite wall page

Facebook data was stripped of the visual graphics and formatting. While I was able to observe much of this content in its original format, the data was converted into rich text file (.rtf) word files for further analysis. Only textual content was preserved as data was cleaned to protect the privacy of participants and their "friends." This process included removing all hyperlinks, images, and proper names. Participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, and I replaced all other names with tags to identify their relationship as a friend from high school (HF), college (CF), family member (FA) or unknown (UN).

These sources were supplemented with two or three online surveys and an interview at the end of each semester. On surveys, the young women were asked about their social networks and

coursework; if they were not in school, they were asked about community and work experiences. In interviews, I asked the women about their college experiences, sense of belonging or fitting in, role models, extracurricular activities, and support networks. Interviews at the end of each semester were an important source of data. FREE Pathways interviews lasted between twenty and forty minutes. Each interview was transcribed and names were replaced with pseudonyms.

Based on my experiences in these digitally-mediated exchanges with participants and my growing curiosity about the integration of digital media into the lives of participants, I decided that further analysis of digital media use within the FREE Pathways study would be the focus of my dissertation study. The FREE Pathways data sources used in this dissertation include all of the Facebook data and interviews from 2010-2011.

Since I was also involved in the ongoing analysis and collection of FREE and FREE Pathways data, the larger ethnographic study also informed my understanding of the young women's educational pathways and provided a context for ongoing communication with the young women. For example, while working on analysis for this dissertation, I was also analyzing text messages from the women's high school years, coding data from prior years, administering surveys and collecting additional Facebook and interview data.

Digital Possibilities

Participants

I invited the twenty-four FREE Pathways participants to participate in a supplementary study that focused specifically on their use of digital media. I called this study "digital possibilities" to reflect my interest in understanding digital media in the young women's lives and as a component of ethnographic research. As shown in Table 1, seventeen women agreed to

have data collected from 2010-2011 of the FREE Pathways study included in the supplemental analysis, thirteen participated in follow-up interviews, and seven took part in a series of focus groups during the 2011-2012 school year. All of the women also continued their participation in the FREE Pathways study.

Table 1

Digital Possibilities participant list

School Group	Pseudonym	2011-2012	Interview	Focus Group
Chavez	Genne	Y	Y	Y
	Chivas	Y	Y	Y
	Sophia	Y	Y	Y
	Aerith	Y	Y	-
	Jayde	Y	Y	-
	Stephie	Y	-	-
Aspire	Mikey	Y	Y	-
	Tatum	Y	Y	Y
	Ana	Y	Y	-
	Neva	Y	Y	-
	Razz	Y	-	-
Southside	Mirele	Y	Y	Y
	Liz	Y	Y	Y
	Lizbeth	Y	Y	-
	Teresa	Y	Y	-
	Mariene	Y	-	Y
	Adilene	Y	-	-
	Total	N=17	N=13	N=7

The women all grew up in the same metropolitan area yet came from a diverse set of backgrounds.

- Two identified as black or African-American, thirteen as Latina or Hispanic, one as White and one as Asian.
- Four were not born in the United States and immigrated to Colorado as young children, and at least six were in the first generation of their family to be born in the United States. One openly identified as bisexual and one as gay.
- All grew up in lower or lower-middle-income families that earned between $12,000 and $55,000 per year and usually included at least one adult and several children.

The seventeen participants who consented to participate in the supplementary data collection and analysis for this dissertation were all from the three Denver-area high schools in the FREE study:

- Six graduated from "Chavez High School," a predominantly Mexican-American and working class comprehensive public high school in an historically agricultural section of the city where Mexican Americans have lived for several generations;
- Five graduated from "Aspire High School," a new public charter school that strived for an ethnically and economically diverse student body ; and
- Six graduated from "Southside High School," a large comprehensive urban public school with a large population of Mexican-American families that had recently immigrated to the United States.

All of the young women had been identified as academically talented in math or science by teachers and counselors as sophomores in high school, and most graduated in the top ten percent of their class. After high school graduation, fifteen of these seventeen participants enrolled in

college. Within two years, some of them changed majors (n=8), moved to other 4-year institutions (n=2), decided to attend community college (n=5), or had un-enrolled from college for at least a semester (n=3). Two did not enroll in school at all.

Supplementary Data Collection

During January and February 2012, I conducted supplementary interviews and focus groups with seven participants. In my supplementary data collection, I followed up on themes that emerged in preliminary analysis of BlackBerry data from the FREE study (Eisenhart and Allaman, in preparation) and Facebook data from FREE Pathways. For example, in both sets of digital data, we noticed that the women devoted much of their communication to school, romance, and family. We considered these as salient figured worlds in the young women's lives, and I set out to gain a fuller understanding of these figured worlds and how Facebook mediated the women's participation in them.

In a series of four focus groups, we talked about their "earliest dreams," how education fit into their aspirations, and what their families told them about education. I also asked about their support networks, how they used digital media and Facebook as well as their perspectives on romance, sexuality and marriage. To enhance the conversation and allow participants to express their ideas in multiple ways, participants created diagrams, illustrations and lists of ideas related to each of these topics. In addition, I recorded field notes after each focus group session. [See Appendix A for the focus group protocol, Appendix B for the interview protocol, and Appendix C for sample artifacts.] The supplementary data enriched my analysis of data collected as part of FREE Pathways by providing additional context to which I could index the Facebook data.

I analyzed the 2011-2012 Facebook data and the fall 2010 and spring 2011 interviews from seventeen participants for this dissertation study. Selecting one year of data from the FREE Pathways study provided a substantial amount of data while also limiting the dataset to a size that I could carefully analyze. [See Appendix D for Year 5 group post protocol and Appendix E for Year 5 interview protocol.]

Supplemental interviews lasted between ten and twenty minutes and were similarly prepared for analysis. As I collected, cleaned and analyzed data, I wrote analytic memos. Table 2 summarizes the database of Facebook archives, interview transcripts from Year 5 of the FREE Pathways study, supplemental focus groups, interviews, and artifacts that served as my sources of evidence.

Table 2

Sources of evidence

Type of Document	N
FB group pages (26 weekly topics, by high school, 17 participants)	78
FB wall pages (spring and fall semester, 17 participants)	34
FB information pages (1-2 times per semester, 17 participants)	66
2011-2012 interview transcripts (spring and fall, 17 participants)	34
Supplemental interview transcripts (13 participants)	13
Artifacts (scanned images, 7 focus group participants)	14
Field notes from Focus groups (7 participants)	4
Analytic memos	23

Data Analysis

I imported rich text files of Facebook data, interview transcripts, field notes and artifacts into Atlas.ti 6.2 for analysis. In my first level of coding, I applied the coding structure developed by the FREE Pathways research team and used it to code all 2010-11 data. Ten large coding categories were identified to sort the data by attitudes, knowledge and experiences about Science, Engineering, Technology and Math (STEM); self-concept; college climate; financial resources; social capital and networks (including family, classmate and friendship networks); cultural capital; future goals and planning; time management; and issues of ethnicity, class and gender. Participation in youth/peer culture was added to account for many exchanges on Facebook walls: this category included technology references, references to romance and sexuality, and political/historical references. The FREE coding taxonomy was useful for organizing and reducing the data into manageable and coherent "bins" (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). [See Appendix F for FREE Pathways Year 5 Coding Taxonomy.]

For responses to group posts, I selected the full response of each participant and applied all relevant codes. For interview responses, I coded interview questions and the complete responses with all applicable codes. For wall posts, I included the original post and all responses as one coded section. Most sections of coded text had between one and three codes applied to them. By coding sections of text with multiple codes, I was able to generate co-occurring code reports and create network visuals of the relationships between codes. I also created analytic memos during the coding process and noted trends for each participant as well as patterns across the group.

Following the initial phase of coding using the FREE Pathways categories, I developed a secondary coding taxonomy based on patterns and themes that emerged through analytic memos,

focus groups, field notes and supplementary interviews. I organized the secondary coding into four major sections: "tracing dreams" included educational aspirations, identities and family support of education; "Facebook" included norms of participation, literacy practices, strategies and descriptions of use; "Institutional Encounters" included features of higher education encounters like advising and financial aid, barriers, supports, and enrollment status; and Romance included definitions of romance, characterizations of men, treatment of homosexuality and romantic play. [See Appendix G for secondary coding taxonomy.] During this second phase of coding, I followed Mathew Miles and Michael Huberman's *Qualitative Data Analysis* (1994) to drive my higher inference coding. This included adding codes where needed, such as a code for experiences of un-enrolling from college and discussions about the role of technology in learning about college requirements.

In addition to manually coding, I also used Atlas.ti's analytic functions to investigate patterns of high and low frequency use and the distribution of exchanges by high school friends, family and college friends. This was useful because it helped me to confirm and disconfirm "hunches." For example, when I auto-coded for "maintained" versus "bridging" social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007), I found that there were 2982 exchanges with high school friends and family and only 967 exchanges with college friends. The seventeen young women I included in my analysis communicated with their high school friends and their family approximately three times as much as they did with friends they met while in college.

A large part of the analysis process was also my own sense-making about the relationship between Facebook data, interviews, and supplemental focus groups. I worked to reconcile and index these various sources of information to increase my understanding of the women's explanations of educational aspirations and trajectories, relationships with family, use of digital

media, encounters with college institutions, and beliefs about romance. For example, I found that even though all of the FREE participants indicated that higher education was very important to them, financial decisions and school context served to influence their selection of courses, majors and future plans.

An important finding in this process was that Facebook differentially privileged college-going and professionally-oriented information. Initially, I had trouble aligning the women's diverging educational pathways with variations in Facebook usage. This was perhaps due to my own bias: an inclination to treat digital media (and in this case Facebook) as affording the young women a space for agency to respond to the challenges they faced in their educational endeavors. Once I shifted my gaze from the shared creative practices the young women as a cohort were engaged in on Facebook (e.g. code switching, use of popular cultural references) to the work Facebook was doing in the young women's lives (e.g. providing a limited array of categories on information pages, bolstering college peer networks), their college enrollment status emerged as an obvious (and unavoidable) organizing hermeneutic to understand how Facebook was remediating the women's educational pathways.

Ultimately, I changed the title of this project from "Digital Possibilities*"* to "Updating Status" to reflect ways that Facebook magnified differences based on the young women's enrollment in colleges and universities. Despite my initial hesitation, I could not ignore the ways that Facebook reinforced emerging differences between the women. As the women updated their wall post statuses, the site promoted the upward social mobility of the college-going women by enhancing their social and cultural capital. At the same time, it silenced and/or marginalized the experiences of women who were struggling to access higher education. Weaving together

Facebook use and educational pathways, this became a more critical and honest story about the interaction of digital media with diverging educational pathways.

Participant Observation

Ongoing interactions with the young women and access to multiple sources of information allowed me to generate a deep understanding of the various contexts of their lives and how the young women were changing and developing over time. This was possible because of my long-term involvement with the FREE Pathways study and ongoing participant observation via Facebook.

Participant-observation was invaluable in helping me describe, understand and interpret information about the young women's lives. I had access to the women's wall posts as their "friend," they also had access to my Facebook wall. None of our wall posts were directed specifically to the FREE Pathways project and as a result afforded an important vantage point to view each other's lives, including exchanges with friends and family. Facebook helped me keep updated on important events in their lives, changes in relationship status and accomplishments they shared on the platform. Information pages were much more static, although a source of information about the networks (college, scholarship, high school, family) they belonged to post-graduation.

During one of the focus groups, I asked the seven participants how social and digital media fit into their lives. Sophia looked at me, a bit confused, and said that "they don't really fit into our lives, they're part of them." The distinction between "fitting in" and "just being part of lives" helped me to appreciate the increasing integration of digital media into participants' lives (and mine) as well as my own integration into the FREE Pathways project as a researcher.

Like any newcomer, I had my own moments of feeling awkward as I tried to figure out how to "Facebook," nose around in participants' lives, ask personal and possibly invasive questions, pester busy young women to post on the site, and fill out paperwork. Despite my initial discomfort, I came to embrace my own strange role as a sanctioned "Facebook Stalker" who could also be a willing mentor and researcher among an amazing, dynamic, humorous and talented group of young women.

Subjectivity

Research, concern for the women's futures, Facebook, and text messaging started to "just be a part of my life." My engagement in the FREE Pathways project and relationships with the young women also shaped my educational trajectory and crystallized some of my own research commitments and values.

I came into research as a teacher who wanted to listen more deeply to the stories of young people, and to understand what they could tell us about the fabric of our school system. I wondered about the interplay between historical trends, like immigration; federal policies, like No Child Left Behind; state policies, like standardized testing; and local decisions, like school boards' decision to commit significant resources to packaged curricula and computerized testing. I wondered how these factors shaped the experiences students had when they entered my classroom. I also wondered how schooling shaped their ideas about themselves, learning and their futures.

These were not simple questions, but ones that perplexed me, frustrated me, and motivated me to pursue doctoral coursework in education. I wanted to know more about the details, the questions I could ask, how I could answer them, and was hopeful that I might find

some way to make things better for young people. As I finish my doctorate in education, I continue to work with students in school and community settings. I am still eager to hear young people's stories, but I have better questions to ask:

- What do you want to happen here (from Participatory Action Research)?
- What does education mean to you (from educational anthropology)?
- Who do you hope to be (from the aspirations I have learned from young people)?

This engagement with listening deeply to stories, mostly through ethnography and supplemented with Facebook, paired with a concern for broader policy issues, has shaped the ways that I ask questions and understand the answers I hear. As I display the findings from my dissertation research based on one year of the FREE Pathways study, this is also my story, my perspective interwoven with the stories an amazing group of young women has been willing to share with me. I have lingered over the unfairness I feel when these young women are thwarted in their dreams, and I have erred on the side of being critical of the world they face and honoring the unique and energetic ways they approach their lives.

Thanks to their honesty, willingness to trust the FREE Pathways research team with their digital records, and courage in pursuing their dreams, I have learned a tremendous amount about what it is like not to have the winds of privilege in your sails. Growing up in the same metropolitan area, I shared the same love of learning and educational aspirations of a college degree as this group of young women expressed. However, I had parents with the financial means to pay for my tuition; an upwardly mobile family that followed the white flight to an affluent suburban school district; a phenotype of blue eyes and fair skin that led people to make different assumptions about me; school and state institutions that recognized and supported my

aspirations; and a Title IX generational outlook that told me that as a woman I could do anything and be anyone I desired.

In the chapters that follow, I trace a different path with the help of other women's eyes, voices and digital records. Theirs is a path of aspiration for education, family, and independence, but it is not the one that I traveled. In many ways it is much more interesting and more revealing of the state we live in and the state of our education system.

CHAPTER V

GOOD STUDENTS IN A FIGURED WORLD OF SCHOOL

Introduction

For FREE Pathways participants, education was a personal endeavor: their accomplishments in school informed who they were in their families and communities and they embraced learning as enjoyable and enriching. Years after their high school graduation, they continued to refer to their accomplishments in high school, indexing their standing as good students and aspirations for future achievement.

In this chapter, I introduce some of the young women and provide information about their family backgrounds, high school accomplishments and trajectories at their high school commencements. I describe the figured world of schooling they shared, the connections they drew between formal schooling, success and family social mobility; and the lessons the young women learned about themselves and educational opportunities as they navigated the transition out of high school and established themselves as college students and young adults.

Participant Profiles

Mirele

Mirele attended Southside High School where she did well academically: she was on the school's Honor Roll all four years she was in high school and graduated with a 4.7 grade point average, placing her in the top ten students of her graduating class. She was active in several clubs including the Anime club. During her senior year, she was recognized for her efforts in school as she was named a Mile High Scholar and awarded several certificates for being an outstanding student in her Chinese and French classes.

Mirele moved with her family from Mexico when she was a child. While in high school, she lived with her mother and younger sister. Her family's income was approximately $12,000 per year. Mirele babysat her younger cousins, and her aunt occasionally paid her. She declined to work outside of her family because she did not have legal documentation to be in the United States. In an emotional interview, she explained that this contributed to her family's economic hardship, but she felt that it was unethical and potentially dangerous for her to be formally employed.

Mirele spoke mostly Spanish at home with her mom and was also fluent in English. She had a passion for languages and understood some Chinese, understood and read some French, and taught herself to read and write Korean. When I asked about her racial and ethnic identification, she answered, "The answer is probably Mexican-American but somehow I feel like an outcast in either culture. Sometimes I feel like neither and sometimes I feel like both."[6] She explained that she felt like a mixture of several different cultures and had been influenced by her studies of Asian languages: "If I had to choose, I'd say I'm mixed on the inside and Mexican-American on the outside" (Personal communication, August 2012).

When Mirele was considering colleges, she "knew" she could not get "money" (federal financial aid) to go to any colleges or universities she wanted to attend because of her residency status, so she only applied to a regional four-year university and a local community college. She was accepted to both and wanted to go to the four year university. However, she received a merit-based scholarship that she could only use at the community college so she decided to go there. The scholarship program was cancelled after the first year (Mirele was told this was because many of the students did not earn good enough grades; she had earned all As). Despite

[6] I have minimally edited the young women's words, making only slight adjustments such as capitalizing "I" and correcting other typographical errors. Other changes made to omit actual names of people, institutions and places and to improve clarify are made in brackets.

this setback, Mirele continued her enrollment at the community college and hoped to complete an Associate's Degree in art or foreign languages. Without financial aid she took only one or two classes each semester after her first year of college.

Lizbeth

Lizbeth also attended Southside High School. She earned all As, excelled in many Advanced Placement classes, and was on the honor roll for four years. She was active in a long list of community service and extracurricular activities. She was most actively involved in basketball and student leadership: Lizbeth was selected as the basketball team's captain, elected to be Class President her senior year, and served as a Student Council Representative for two years. She was also part of Latinas of Vision, National Honor Society, Smart Girls, Venus de Miles, and the Volunteers in Partnership program where she mentored middle school students. By the time she graduated, she had earned her high school's Citizenship, Student of the Month, Business Technology, All Around Student of the Year, Perfect Attendance, and "School Would Fall Apart Without You" awards.

During high school, Lizbeth lived with her parents and three sisters. Their annual income was about $33,000 per year. During high school, Lizbeth worked a few different part-time retail jobs, first at a small music store and then at a wireless phone company. At home, she spoke Spanish and some English. Lizbeth and her sisters were bilingual in Spanish and English, her mother spoke Spanish and improved her English over the years, and her father primarily spoke Spanish. Lizbeth identified herself as Mexican-American. Her parents immigrated to the United States as teenagers, stopped going to school and began working: her mother started working as a nursing assistant at fifteen years of age and her father began working in construction when he was thirteen years old.

At seventeen years of age and a junior in high school, Lizbeth became pregnant. In a memoir she shared with me, she wrote:

> This immature girl who had so much going for her had to tell her mother that the world had stopped and reality had set in, that a different lifestyle paved my future. My older cousins had gotten pregnant and dropped out of school. They said they tried to finish high school, but found it too stressful. Now they are single mothers working and struggling to raise their children. The typical Hispanic teenage female, mother struggling with multiple obstacles—the last thing I thought I would become. (Personal communication, August, 2012)

Lizbeth's son was born in November of her senior year of high school. At this pivotal time, she wrote about her son in her essays for college,

> I want to go to college because education is the only thing I can come back and rely on, the only tool that will not make me fail and become just a statistic. I know I can better my life and the life of my child having a college degree. (Personal communication, August 2012)

She applied to five major universities in Colorado and was accepted to all of them. Six different scholarship foundations recognized her high school achievements and academic potential and offered her substantial scholarships.

Although she almost didn't apply to one of Colorado's elite private universities because she felt it was a "reach" to be accepted, she ultimately applied, was accepted to, and decided to attend the "school of her dreams" (Personal communication, August 2012). Lizbeth initially majored in business. Within her first year, she changed her focus to English and Secondary Education and planned to be a high school English teacher.

Chivas

Chivas attended Chavez High School. Throughout high school she was very involved and received various awards for her academic and extracurricular involvement. She played soccer, basketball, volleyball, ran cross country, and was involved in other clubs and activities. She consistently earned good grades and was ranked near the top of her graduating class.

Chivas' family had strong ties in the United States and Mexico, and Chivas identified as Mexican. Her paternal grandparents were the first in her family to immigrate to the United States from Mexico. When she was in high school, Chivas lived with these grandparents while her parents returned to Mexico for work. Her brother and sisters continued to live in the Denver-metro area and during her senior year of high school she lived with her older sister and her sister's husband. Growing up, Spanish was Chivas' first language, although she was fluent in and spoke both Spanish and English at home. Chivas had the support of her grandparents, parents and siblings. Living in an extended family of several households, she was not able to report an annual family income. Throughout high school she would occasionally work at her aunt's restaurant, a job she continued to do through college.

Academically successful and involved in many school activities, Chivas applied to ten colleges and universities and she was accepted to every school. She was awarded a scholarship to play soccer at one out-of-state university, but decided to stay in Colorado and be closer to her family, friends and community. Chivas enrolled at a public university and majored in Human Services. She received a scholarship her freshman year of college and had it extended to her sophomore year. She specified her United States residency status as an "unaccompanied minor," which gave her access to greater federal financial aid.

Sophia

Sophia also attended Chavez High school. She earned a varsity letter in swimming, served as the Junior Class Secretary for the school's Student Council, was a member of the fellowship of Christian Athletes, participated in Leader's challenge, was a CASA START leader, Upward Bound participant, and Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) student. Sophia was also on the honor roll for several years.

When Sophia was in high school she lived with her mother and younger sister. Their annual income was about $19,000. During her junior year of high school, Sophia worked twenty hours per week at a clothing retail store.

Sophia, her mother and sister spoke English and Spanish at home, although they all had different language preferences: Her mother preferred to speak Spanish around the house because it was easier for her. While Spanish was the first language Sophia and her sister learned to speak, English became their main language. When I asked Sophia about her racial and ethnic identifications she said,

> "When I am asked, my response is 'I'm Hispanic.' I used to say 'I'm Mexican' but I was corrected because saying you are Mexican implies (so I was told) that I was born in Mexico while Hispanic just means that I am a descendant. To me it is not really that important but it is a phrase that I adopted because it satisfies the person asking the question without lots of explanation." (Personal communication, September 2012)

She explained to me that she and her sister were born in the United States, officially the first generation in her immediate family to be born in the United States. Many of her aunts and uncles were born in the U.S., and her parents were among the few in that generation of her family to be born in Mexico but live in the United States most of their lives.

Sophia applied and was accepted to four of the largest universities in Colorado. She attended one of the public universities for a semester and intended to major in Forensics. However, after her first semester she decided to move home with her family and transfer to a local community college. She attributed this decision to ongoing health problems and concerns about the amount of her student loans at the university.

Mikey

Mikey attended a public charter school, Aspire High School. During high school she participated in Yearbook, Prom Committee, Peer Tutoring, Peer Mediation, and Colorado Uplift. She also kept a part-time job and worked mostly on the weekends. She was not sure of her class ranking, but she earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.8; nearly all As in challenging Advanced Placement classes. She was on the honor roll all four years of high school.

Mikey's home language was English and she identified herself as Black. She lived in a home with her mother, sister, brother, cousin, niece and nephew. Their annual household income was about $33,000.

Nearing high school graduation, she applied to seven elite colleges and universities across the United States. She was accepted to all of them except one. She received a full-ride college scholarship from a major Colorado-based foundation that covered all of her tuition and related expenses for four years at any university she decided to attend. She enrolled at a private liberal arts college in another state and intended to study Chemistry. By the end of her sophomore year, she changed her major to psychology and was considering graduate school.

Razz

Razz also attended Aspire High School. She participated in the Astronomy Club, Chemistry Club, Food Club, her school's National Honor Society chapter and Colorado Uplift.

She earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.7 and received academic honors every trimester of high school. She was also named the Spanish Student of the Year for three years, received her school's Core Values Awards, and was recognized by one of the state's universities as Colorado High School Junior of the Year.

Razz was the first in her generation to be born in the United States. Her parents emigrated from Sierra Leone and she spoke both English and Timni at home, and she also gained fluency in Spanish as a high school student. When she was in high school, Razz lived with her mother, three younger sisters and her grandmother. She estimated her family's annual income to be between twenty and thirty thousand dollars per year.

An academically talented student, Razz applied to six prestigious colleges and universities. She was accepted to all of them and awarded a major scholarship. Razz decided to attend a private university in another state and major in Engineering. She received several scholarships from her university in addition to a scholarship from a major foundation. After her first semester in Engineering, Razz changed her major to Business with a minor in Spanish.

I selected these women because their family backgrounds, high school experiences and college pathways span the range of trajectories of the seventeen women in the FREE Pathways study. Mirele and Lizbeth were ranked among the top students in their class at Southside High School, yet differences in their residency status in the United States, scholarship awards and family resources culminated in Lizbeth attending a prestigious private university while Mirele struggled to maintain minimal enrollment in a community college. Graduating from Chavez High school, Chivas and Sophia enrolled in the same public university, yet Chivas received adequate resources to maintain her enrollment while Sophia withdrew after a semester and

struggled to re-enroll at a community college near her family. Like several of the women from Aspire High School, Mikey and Razz received sustained college counseling in high school, substantial scholarships, enrolled in private liberal arts colleges, and stayed there. While each woman's path is unique, there are also similarities in how the women understood schooling and the ways that economic, social and cultural capital interacted to shape the opportunities the women had in higher education.

A Figured World of Schooling

As high school students and recent graduates, the young women saw themselves as "good" students who believed that through dedication to academic pursuits, involvement in school activities, and respect for their teachers, school would provide the knowledge, experiences and credentials that would help them achieve their goals for the future. They expected that in return for their efforts, their high schools and colleges would recognize their abilities and prepare them for their futures. Schooling, as they understood it, created a pathway for them to achieve their dreams.

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998), Holland and her colleagues describe culturally figured worlds as realms of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Figured worlds are populated by agents who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts and are moved by a specific set of forces: education via formal schooling was a salient figured world for the young women.

In interviews, focus groups, and group posts the young women in this study were asked about their hopes and dreams, future goals, and satisfaction with where they were in their lives.

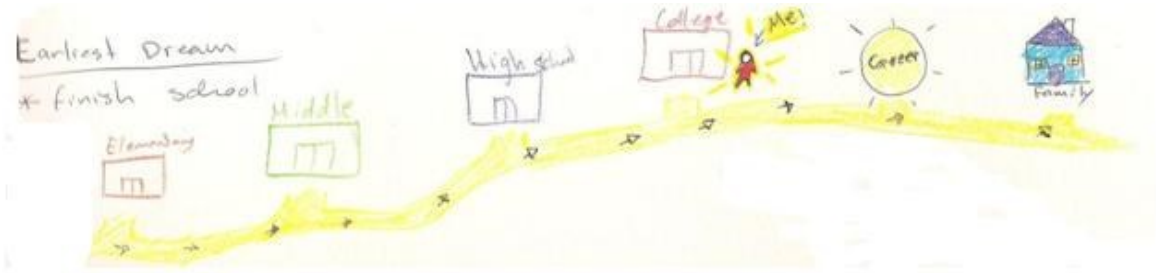
They consistently referred to the importance of education, specifically to earning a college degree, as a goal and priority that was a dream for them and their family.

Imagining Success through Education

In one of the focus groups, I asked the young women to illustrate the earliest dreams they remember their families having for them and how these evolved over time. In these drawings and the discussions that followed, schooling figured prominently in the young women's ideas about themselves and how they would achieve success in life. Mirele's illustration of her "earliest dream" is displayed below in Figure 4. She drew a yellow path with arrows that went from elementary, middle, high school and college with her standing in red next to the college. Her yellow path continues beyond college to "career" which is drawn inside a sun and then a blue house labeled family.

Figure 4

Mirele's illustration: "Earliest Dream"



(Focus group artifact, January 7, 2012)

The other women articulated a similar understanding of school: by earning the best grades they could, taking challenging classes and being involved in extracurricular activities they would thrive in school and move along the pathway towards college, careers and family life.

Chivas explained that her parents had always taught her that a happy life included "salud, dinero y amor" (health, money and love). She said that her parents had never encouraged her to one specific area of study, but rather to have a good job that would allow her to provide for herself and her family. She was confident that her college degree and the field of study she selected would lead her to a job in the future where she could also have health, enough money and love. Chivas's high school classmate and friend, Genne, agreed with this idea that schooling was integral to a "good life." She explained that her family's dreams for her always revolved around finishing school and having a family.

Proving Oneself as a Good Student

Doing well in school held promises of future success for the young women and offered a place for them to shine. The young women talked about themselves as people who were naturally good at school—capable of earning good grades, who enjoyed learning, and who were willing and able to do the work their teachers asked them to do. Mirele explained that her mother never had to push her to be in school because she liked school and wanted to do well. Sophia agreed: she always liked school and did well so her mother didn't have to push her very much either. In high school, Sophia thought she would be a doctor and added "because I'm so smart." She graduated high school and then wasn't so sure what she would do, but her mother encouraged her: "You can be anything you want to be."

Jayde, who was one of Chivas and Sophia's classmates at Chavez High School, explained that she was "pretty confident" that she would graduate from college because she enjoyed learning, always liked school and always did well in classes.

> I've always liked school; I never had time like a hard time like in classes or anything. I'm not scared to go like to school or take a class. Like if I want to take that class; I don't

> know, I just like learning new things. I took nine years of orchestra and band, I did really good in science and math, and I always did good like in my history and political science and I was interested in like everything. I did volunteer work in hospitals. I like trying something new and like taking a class, [it] is always more intriguing because I'm like always wanting to know more, and I am, like, you know, I feel like I'm confident about taking a class. (Interview, May 31, 2011)

With the opportunity to be among the first in their families to earn college degrees, the young women considered it special and a privilege to be able to go to college. They talked about school—both the public high schools they attended and the colleges they matriculated into—as offering better access to good jobs than they could get without a formal education. They hoped for jobs that would help them support their family members and make their families proud of their accomplishments. In the interview excerpt below, Mikey and Razz's classmate, Neva, explained her views on going to college.

> Neva: I mean the way I see it is that there are people out there that have made it and are successful that don't have a degree. But in my opinion college is just the way to go. Especially, just because I see it, that ten to fifteen years from now it's going to be a requirement to get a job. Maybe not at McDonald's or any of those places, but definitely if you want to get a good paying job, that you're going to have to have some kind of education, even if it is just an Associate's, you are you going to need it, you know? I just really believe that college is the way to go.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think that?
>
> N: I just, I guess I mean I've always liked school. And I always like to learn. That's something, that I'll be passionate about what I like and going to school and being able to

> understand and see how things are changing, I just feel that becoming educated, and not that people who don't go to school are uneducated, but I feel that people that have a college degree can be more, motivated to success and, more able to benefit themselves and you know their family. I mean, I guess for me it's kind of like, you know, coming from an Hispanic family and my parents not going to school, for me I guess school has been an important part of my life, you know? Just to be like, very privileged to be in college, being able to get a degree, where you know my parents had to drop out and start working because they couldn't afford school. So, I mean to me it's very important to know that, you know my parents have given me this opportunity and to be taking advantage of it. (Interview, February 15, 2012)

Like other FREE participants, Neva recognized and asserted that her educational attainment did not mean that "people who don't go to school are uneducated." Rather, education was a privilege, and it was important to her to take advantage of the opportunity she had to go to school.

College was viewed as a gateway to professional careers. For a successful career, college degrees weren't an "option," they were seen as necessary for both personal and professional reasons. Sophia explained:

> College, to me has never really been optional, kind of like, go to school like a high school then go to college, and then do the job. And, like I never, I never ever thought that I wouldn't be in college. It was just something that I always wanted to do and I thought I was supposed to do and it's what is going to come, because, I guess for most of us…the careers that we want require that you have a college education and, I guess that's why it's

> really important because if we don't go to college then our careers that we've dreamed of our entire lives aren't possible. (Interview, February 16, 2012)

Many of the young women valued their college attendance because they believed it provided them with social, cultural and economic opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have.

Liz, Mirele and Lizbeth's classmate at Southside High School immigrated from Southeast Asia as a young child and offered this explanation for the importance of education in accomplishing her goals:

> I mean if you hear the saying like "it's not what you know, it's who you know," and you know there's people who do have contacts early on and just don't need to go to school or don't need to build up those networks, or build up those relationships, because they have that, they know what they want to go to and they know what they have to do to get there, and maybe college is not always the right place or fit. College is really not for everyone, I think, you know, I think some people have an easy time, going straight to a career, or straight into something that they're passionate about.
>
> But, I think for me college is really important just because it opens a lot of doors I wouldn't have otherwise. And I think, like I love learning, I love being, I love being able to, like, I love things that are different and new, and I think college is really good for those and just be surrounded by people that are so different that are so, interested in different specialties and being able to grow from them and to learn from them (Interview, February 11, 2012).

Education was characterized by the young women as a personally enriching path for achieving their dreams, and one with greater guarantees of success than other alternatives.

In the interview below, Lizbeth explained how her college education opened up new worlds and possibilities for her.

> I think, I don't know, I think the only way that you can achieve your dreams is going to college. Because for me to, I don't know, I think that education does change your whole life. And that's why I want to teach because I want to motivate kids to know that you can do whatever you want, as long as you have that, that degree to back you up with. So I mean you can achieve your dreams if you want, but I think it would be easier if you do it with the traditional way starting in high school and going to college. I mean, of course you can't just say if you want to be a dentist, I'm not go to college, but I feel like, the only way that you'll guarantee a bright future and an easier future for yourself is [by] going to college. (Interview, February 14, 2012)

Like Lizbeth, the young women considered themselves to be the type of young people who were willing and capable of finding success through school as they earned high school and college degrees. Their emphasis on education in achieving their dreams and the expectations they placed on doing well in school were also closely tied to being women. In focus group conversations, they explained how their brothers and male classmates might find success through education, but they could also enter the workforce without high school and college degrees. The men in their lives might also find other pursuits more enjoyable and enriching than formal education. The young women contrasted their abilities and interests in school to these alternatives and talked about school as *the* way for them to find success in their futures.

Dealing with the Limitations of Educational Opportunity

Many of the young women distinguished between schooling as an idea and the actual opportunities that were available to them in high schools and colleges. There were “good”

schools that offered them the educational opportunities they expected, “bad” schools that didn’t provide the right opportunities and information, and teachers and classmates who may or may not have recognized them as the ambitious and capable students they were.

Holland et al. theorize that individuals take on “practiced” identities in figured worlds that influence dispositions and are shaped by durable social positions such as race, ethnicity, gender and social class. The young women learned to navigate through an education system that did not always recognize or support their educational aspirations. Consequently, they developed robust practiced identities as savvy and determined young women who learned to engage in schooling as good students who could (and would have to) overcome obstacles in order to achieve their goals.

In the interview excerpt below, Mikey described an important moment in her education when she came to the realization that achieving her dreams through education was not guaranteed at every school: she would have to be strategic and overcome obstacles to accomplish her goals.

> My most important moment in my education happened before I ever entered high school. I went to a really bad middle school; it was so bad that during the first half of my 7th grade year my math and science teacher quit and they never replaced her. So, we went the rest of the year without a teacher. Next year, my mom sent me to another school in a different neighborhood. At my first middle school I never performed well, mostly because I didn't care and none of it seemed to matter. Everyone around me did poorly in school, so I wasn't very motivated to do well. However, at my new [middle] school students actually cared how they did in school, teachers cared that students learned, and it felt like school was actually a means to a better life. So, I started doing better in school. I

made the honor role for the entire year I was there. This isn't the important moment, just the background information.

My important moment came when my best friend (who went to my old middle school with me and transferred to my new [middle] school with me) was shocked when I made the honor roll and said that she never knew I was smart. I couldn't believe that she thought I was stupid. This got me wondering how many other people (friends, teachers) thought I was stupid or somehow incapable of learning and doing well. This also made me think about all the other kids, like me, who were smart but never had a chance, or the right environment, to show their intelligence.

After this moment, I knew that somehow I was going to college and I was going to show all that ever doubted me that I wasn't stupid, but highly capable. And I wanted to somehow make a difference, so that children like me will have the opportunity to do the same. (Interview via Facebook messages, March 5, 2012)

Mikey extrapolated her experiences of being mistaken as "stupid" to a larger critique of schools as places where "kids, like me, who were smart" might never have "a chance, or the right environment, to show their intelligence." She presented this experience as a catalyst for her determination to go to college. Mikey and many of the other young women believed that schooling could provide them with the skills, knowledge, opportunities and credentials they needed, but doing so would also mean proving people wrong and setting an example for "other children."

The young women recognized that the public schools they attended did not always prepare them, or their classmates, for their futures. Jayde, who graduated near the top of her class from Chavez High School, but was unable to afford to go to college, critiqued her high school for inadequately preparing students for their futures. In the interview excerpt below, she recognized that many of her high school classmates never graduated and that even those who attended all four years were not prepared for their futures.

> The biggest lesson I think I've learned is like when I first got out of high school because they don't teach you, like they teach you how to like move on to college, but not about the real world. Nobody teaches you like how to manage your money or like how do basic things like to succeed. Like, in high school they make you take requirements like PE. Our high school dropout [rate] was like really big. [Chavez] high school has a record for dropout [that] is huge. Like you had our freshman class and you're like what the hell happened? Like senior year 300 kids are gone.
>
> I feel like there's a lack, like, of getting out of high school and not being prepared for the real world because they don't teach any sort of thing. Say you are [a] dropout or let's say that you do finish high school and you don't have money or nothing to go to like a college and you want to go to college, there's not a lot of sources out there that teach you how to be financial, how to do this, how to get an apartment, how to get credit, how not to get or why not to get a credit card. I think like managing money is like the most important lesson you'll ever learn even after you graduate. (Interview, May 31, 2011)

Jayde raised an important criticism: whether students "dropped out" or graduated and wanted to go on to college, their high school did not necessarily provide them with resources about how to pay for college or how to manage money when they entered the workforce.

Like many of the other women, Jayde had expected that her high school would provide her with the necessary information and resources she needed to be successful after high school. She had done her part as a student who excelled in several Advanced Placement classes and graduated with a high grade point average. She realized in retrospect that being a good student did not necessarily mean that her school had adequately prepared her for the future.

Mikey expressed a similar sentiment of disappointment in not feeling adequately prepared for college life. In her sophomore year of college, she explained that her experience with college life was not the "fairy tale college experience" she had imagined.

> I think this experience was a lot more enjoyable than last year. I learned a little more. But, I'm still like, 'oh my goodness' it's not like a fairy tale college experience like I kind of grew up thinking…college was going to be like. (Interview, January 14, 2011)

Mikey explained that she had "imagined [her] college experience to be similar to how it is portrayed in the media" in television shows like "Sister Sister, Clueless, Saved by the Bell, and Sabrina the Teenaged Witch." As a result, she had expected college to be more intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling. Mikey explained it this way:

> I expected the atmosphere to be more inviting and intellectually stimulating. Although, I have learned a lot while at college, I don't think my time here has changed me [or] helped me grow in any significant way. I think I have done most of my personal evolving outside of a college setting (like doing outside volunteer work). Also, I imagined there

> would be more opportunities to work with professors and outside organizations. (Facebook message, January 2013)

Mikey explained that her "lack of the 'fairy tale' experience" was due "in part, to [her] unfamiliarity" with college life, and she felt that she might have had a better experience if she had "known early on in [her] college career how to pursue certain opportunities" including mentoring programs, undergraduate research and study abroad programs. Not being fully prepared for college, as in knowing what to expect and how to navigate college opportunities, had contributed to Mikey feeling disappointed in her college experiences.

Constructing Educational Winners and Losers

The women began to see themselves and others as winners and losers in an educational system where opportunities were not evenly distributed or accessible. Some felt privileged and grateful that they had a chance to move on to college when others did not. Others were frustrated and disappointed that despite their accomplishments in high school they were not able to pay for school or pursue degrees in fields they wanted to study.

Those who were able to enroll in college talked about the advantages they felt college attendance gave them. In the example below, Lizbeth reflected on how college opened her up to "a new world" that would not have been possible if she had had to "learn everything herself."

> I feel like college opens you up to like a new world. And it's, I know for me it's been like going to a different, like I see two different worlds. Like not going to college and people who do go to college, and I feel like, you, you just learn more about the world and it's not just learning about your own major, you take courses in everything, anything that you find interesting and you come out with a broader view of the world. You know how things work, and how different points of view, like different aspects of the world, and,

> opposed to not going to college, and having to learn everything yourself, like you pick up things here and there but it's not taught to you in classes. (Interview, February 14, 2012)

Lizbeth described seeing "two different worlds:" going to college or not. She felt that college gave her an advantage because she could "learn more about the world" and "know how things worked" because she didn't have to "learn everything herself." Her college experiences were giving her a "broader view of the world" and an advantage over people who were not able to go to college.

By their second year in college, the young women who were in school were also beginning to realize that even though college might give them advantages over people who didn't go on to college, there was stratification within college that they hadn't anticipated. Many of the women talked about the disappointment and shock they felt on college campuses as they recognized inadequacies in their high school preparation, were minoritized by campus efforts to promote diversity, and struggled to manage their finances to maintain their enrollment.

These challenges also revealed significant differences between their own backgrounds and that of many of their college peers. Many of the women found that although they were strong students in high school, the schools they had attended did not offer the same opportunities many of their college classmates had experienced. For example, Liz was discouraged when she compared her public high school preparation with the "individualized learning experiences" her liberal arts college classmates had in their high schools.

> I felt really discouraged about like these kids coming from…like really different families, you know, like, coming from private school and getting really individualized learning experience and getting to learn or getting to do experiments or whatever they got to . [It gave them] more confidence [when] we

> should be on a more level playing field, I thought. [For me], being one of the few minorities on campus it's like sometimes I feel a little bit pressured to do more. (Interview, May19, 2011)

Like Liz, many of the women recognized that they had not entered college on a "level playing field" because their classmates had more rigorous preparation in high school. Liz felt "pressured to do more" to overcome these differences as one of the "few minorities" on campus.

The women realized that there were significant differences between them and many of their classmates at universities that were "very dominated by White people" and attended by students who could have "mom and dad pay" for everything. Lizbeth and Mirele's classmate at Southside High School, Mariene, described how she struggled to balance work and studying, and to relate to her wealthier classmates.

> Obviously, [my university] is a very dominant, very dominated by White people. So it's not that I don't feel comfortable with White people, I mean White people and me can be friends all we want but it's kind of hard to see girls who have mom and dad pay their stuff have Hummers and you have to work your ass off [to] pay your tuition and they don't understand when you're struggling with something and you're working a job. I know a girl who's held a job for two weeks, for her entire life. And so to her, for her to see me struggle studying and her, she's just like kicking back and like "oh I studied earlier," thinking she's all that when I didn't. (Interview, May 31, 2011)

While her wealthier White classmate was able to relax and had more than enough time to study, Mariene worked thirty to forty hours a week, joined a Latina sorority and pursued a double major in business and math education, while also managing the requirements of her financial aid

package and scholarship applications. Studying and completing homework were just one of the many responsibilities she carried as she pursued a college degree—something she felt was overlooked and not understood by many of her college peers.

Education and Family

Holland et al. theorize that there are multiple "sites of the self:" individuals' identities are embedded in social practice and the "the loci of self-production or self-processes are recognized as plural" (p. 28). The plurality of worlds for self-productions suggests that cultural worlds and identities are shaped by the processes of figuration and positionality within *and* between lived worlds (p. 287).

In the following exchange, Mirele talks about her family's education and her goals of earning "as many degrees as she can" so she can prove herself to her family and help support them.

> Mirele: It's just, like a lot of my family didn't go to college and they didn't get a really great education, so I want to show them that I can do it and that things won't stop me. I just feel that I want to show them that I can. [crying] I'm sorry.
>
> Interviewer: How do you think they will react when you graduate?
>
> M: I think they'll be really happy. But after I get my Associate's Degree I want to go for a higher degree. Yeah, like schools, I want to get as many degrees as I can.
>
> I: Is there anyone in your family who's graduated from college?

M: Umm, I don't think so. Just I think one of my cousins in Mexico. She's going to be a teacher or something. So, I think she's the only one who's actually graduated and is going to do something.

I: Where did this idea come from like, when do you think you first thought "I want to graduate from college?"

M: Umm, I see my mom working and like [crying] I'm sorry. [crying] I can't help but um sorry. [pause] I don't know, it's just she works in very low paying jobs and she complains about. [crying, pause] I don't know everything hurting from um,[Pause, crying] I'm sorry.[Pause, crying] I don't know she works all the time, and she can't really do anything but pay the rent and sometimes she…can't even do that. I don't know, I want to help her when I do graduate, so she doesn't have to work anymore. [crying, pause] I'm sorry. (Interview, May 6, 2011)

Like Mirele, most of the girls framed their educational aspirations as talented, smart women with mention of their experiences growing up in lower-income Hispanic (mostly Mexican-American) and African-American families. They described their educational goals in terms of finding careers where they can make a good living and help support their parents, despite coming from a place where they were often the first in their families to pursue college degrees. For Mirele, graduating from college and having a professional career amounted to "actually going to do something"—it became the only desirable outcome and alternative to the low-paying work she witnessed her mother and other family members enduring.

Families, especially mothers, played an important role in the women's educational aspirations. When asked about their role models, most of the young women named their mothers

as their primary role model, along with other people that provided them with support and encouragement like girlfriends, sisters and mentors. In Facebook group posts, the young women repeatedly named their parents and mothers as their role models. For example, Chivas' friend and classmate, Genne, explained how her parents influenced her:

> My role models are my parents and will always be. They have guided me all along with school and everything else. They are caring and are always looking for my best interest. They are very important because I would probably not be here without all of their unconditional support. (Chavez group page, May 26, 2011)

Lizbeth's close friend and high school classmate, Teresa, echoed similar sentiments about her mother:

> Teresa: My role model will always be my mom. It inspires me how hard she has worked all of her life. My mother was born in Mexico and migrated to the US when she was about 17 years old. Coming to a new country not knowing anybody or the language was her biggest obstacle. But that didn't stop her. My mom continues to work hard especially to help my brothers and I succeed. She is a strong independent woman who I need and love with all of my heart! (Southside group page, June 7, 2011)

The young women's aspirations for college degrees and careers were often construed in terms of social mobility. However these ambitions were rarely individualistic: they expressed their education and career ambitions as a form of social mobility closely tied to supporting their families and staying connected to their home communities. Sophia explained how her career and college aspirations overlapped with her family:

> I mean, I always want to stay close to my family, and I want to have a successful career and one that I'm happy with and one that I can have time to spend with my family, not

> only my family right now, but if I have a family [of] my own later on I want to be able to be home, a lot of the time, and spend time with them. But, I also want to provide a better, life for my family now, like for my mom and my sister. My mom especially because like she's done a lot for me, and she's just sacrificed a lot, and I'd really like to be able to take care of her later on. [voice breaking, crying] (Interview, February 16, 2012)

Sophia looked forward to a future where she could care for her mom, Mirele hoped to support her mother so she wouldn't have to work anymore, and Lizbeth and Teresa talked about returning as teachers to the neighborhoods where they grew up.

Family obligations were also important considerations as the young women weighed future schooling and career plans. When Liz considered the main challenges to achieving her goal of attending graduate school, financing and family obligations were her two main concerns.

> I think financial might be one [problem]. I am blessed to have my undergraduate paid for but I'm going to, if I want to go into med[ical] school or anything along those lines, I think um, I'm going to have to pull out a lot of loans, but I know it will be worth it. But the financial, I want to do something that I know that I'm fully committed to before [I] start it.
>
> I think I'm going to have to find a lot of opportunities close to home because, because, because, I have this obligation to my family, my parents, and I love them and I just don't see myself too far away from them, and I know that going out of state for grad[uate] school or going out of state for a job is kind of out of the question. But, I don't think that's too big of an obstacle because there's so much in Colorado, so many opportunities. (Interview, February 11, 2012)

For Liz, finding a way to pursue her goals while also fulfilling her obligations to help care for her aging parents were important considerations. While "going out of state" for graduate school and work was "out of the question," Liz also felt that there were plenty of opportunities available in Colorado.

Like Liz, most of the young women carefully considered how their education and careers might impact their families: the partners and children some imagined might be part of their future, and the parents and siblings who were already an important part of their lives. Families were an important context through which the young women understood themselves and valued education, as well as a primary source of support and motivation for the women's educational and career aspirations. As the women graduated from high school, their relationships with their families and commitment to education continued to be influential and intertwined cultural worlds.

As alluded to earlier, after high school the women's educational pathways diverged based on their access to economic, social and cultural capital: some of the women were able to accomplish their goals of enrolling in four-year institutions with the help of scholarships and federal financial assistance programs while others struggled to maintain full-time enrollment or persist at non-residential campuses. In these post-high school years, their social networks of family and high school friends became more geographically dispersed: some of the women moved out of their family homes to attend residential universities while others remained at home and watched as their classmates moved away or became preoccupied with work.

As they communicated with their known social ties, Facebook functioned as a "node" in their social networks, mediating their participation in cultural worlds of school, family and peers and creating a digital record of challenges, disappointments and triumphs as they pursued their

educational dreams. In the next two chapters, I consider these diverging educational pathways and how Facebook came to play an important mediating role in the women's social networks, connections to their families, and college-going trajectories.

CHAPTER VI

FACEBOOKING COLLEGE LIFE

Introduction

Two years after high school graduation, the young women held on to their dreams of earning college degrees that would lead to good jobs and careers. They were still confident in their academic abilities, but they were navigating an educational system that was not as straightforward as the "fairy tale" they and their families might have imagined in their youth. Nine of the seventeen women were able to enroll in college as full-time students in four-year programs because of financial assistance they received in the form of grants, loans, and scholarships. The remaining eight found themselves on the margins of higher education, either not enrolled in college (n=4), or enrolled part-time in regional universities (n=1) and two-year community college programs (n=3). In Table 3, I provide a summary of these diverging educational pathways in the second year after all of the women graduated from high school near the top of their class.

Variations in economic, social and cultural resources influenced their enrollment status, choice of major, and progress towards their careers goals, setting them on different educational trajectories which required them to re-imagine what it would take to continue to be good students. For example, financial resources were a determining factor for many of the women. Those who received substantial financial aid through grants, loans or foundational scholarships were able to realize their goal of attending four-year institutions, while the other women struggled to stay enrolled and find adequate financial support for their college aspirations.

Table 3

Summary of college pathways in 2010-2011

Pathway	N	%
Full-time enrollment	9	53%
Public university (n=5)		
Private university or college (n=4)		
On the margins of higher education	8	47%
Not enrolled in college 2010-2011 (4)		
Part-time enrollment in local institutions (1)		
Enrolled in two-year community college program (3)		

In this chapter, I focus on Facebook use by the young women who were fully enrolled in college. There were two types of students who were able enroll full-time in residential colleges and universities: those who had pieced together financial aid loans, grants and scholarships (n=5), and others who received full financial aid with assistance from private foundations (n=4). Drawing on their responses to our Facebook questions, I examine how these two groups of produced two very different expressions of college life on their group page posts. Then, I explain how both groups of women described becoming minorities on campus. Related to this process of minoritization, they used Facebook to stay in touch with supportive social ties to stay strong in an uncomfortable space away from home.

Fully Enrolled in Four-Year Programs

Public Colleges and Universities

Chivas, from Chavez High School; Adilene, Teresa, and Mariene from Southside High School; and Neva from Aspire High School were able to turn their aspirations for college degrees into full-time enrollment through substantial financial aid and scholarship awards. In a sense, they were experiencing "college" the way that most of the FREE Pathways women might have imagined it would unfold: their hard work as high school students and their financial needs were met with public assistance and private scholarships to help them become the first in their families to earn four-year college degrees. Earning college degrees would be challenging but possible for them. I have provided an overview of their trajectories in Table 4.

Like Chivas, these women were able to enter public universities with financial assistance in the form of federal grants and loans accessed through their Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and scholarships ($500-$1500 per year). Once accepted and enrolled in a four-year university, they received valuable support from financial aid officers and mentors that increased the financial support, mentoring and social networks available to them. For example, Chivas' university and scholarship programs helped her learn about additional scholarship programs, provided a mentor who guided her to internships and helped her navigate the university system, and alerted her to programs that provided academic and social support for Latina students. Her parents had returned to Mexico by the time she enrolled in college and a financial aid counselor at her public university helped her change her U.S. residency status to an "unaccompanied minor," which made her eligible for greater financial assistance. Once enrolled at the university she also joined a non-traditional sorority where she found "sisters" who shared similar socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

Table 4

Participants with full-time enrollment in public colleges and universities

Name	Enrollment Status	Finances	Trajectory
Chivas	Public university	Loans and grants, with help of financial aid counselor and mentor gained "unaccompanied minor" status, which increased aid.	Planning to graduate in four years with degree in Human Services and Spanish.
Adilene	Public university	Didn't apply for scholarships first year, but was helped once enrolled.	Planning to graduate in four years with degree in Evolutionary Biology. Looking into possibilities for internships and graduate school.
Teresa	Public university	Some loans with many different smaller scholarships.	Looking to graduate in four or five years with a teaching degree in Bilingual and Bicultural Elementary Education.
Mariene	Public university then transferred to second public university closer to home in second year (2010-2011)	Loans, grants and works full time to help cover expenses	Health and stress challenges but thriving academically, expects to graduate in four years with degree in Business.
Neva	At community college, plans on transferring to four year to finish nursing degree	Loans, family support, scholarship denied because Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) was too high.	Taking advantage of affordable community college tuition in program that is closely tied to four-year nursing program.

Enrolled in public universities, Chivas and the other women at public universities experienced moments of uncertainty as they negotiated financing and schedules to maintain their enrollment. They also coped with the challenges of managing financial aid and scholarships to make sure that their tuition and fees were paid at the right time. A few times the women were inadvertently dropped from classes when their financial aid did not come through on time, and they worked with financial aid and scholarship advisors to maintain their enrollment. Several of the young women had to take out emergency loans to cover tuition, accept the loss of credits, and spend considerable time contacting scholarship and financial aid offices to figure out their aid packages. Unlike some of their peers, when these problems arose, they were able to find resources that helped them maintain their enrollment.

When it came to majors and courses, they selected degree programs that drew on their interests and skills, including their bilingualism, love of "numbers," "helping people," and "kids." They selected majors in fields where they felt they would be successful and enjoy their career. They interpreted grades of As and Bs as an indication that they were well suited for these fields. The women at four year universities found majors where they could pursue their passions and find majors that developed their talents. When Chivas explained her choice of Spanish and Human Services, she emphasized that her major would allow her to help people and Hispanics: things that she "loved" and were "perfect for her."

> Chivas: So i just declared Spanish as my major about three weeks ago and decided that i am also going to declare a sociology major with a minor in human services. I love helping people, mainly hispanics so i feel that these are PERFECT for me =). (Chavez group page, November 6, 2011)

Choosing majors in fields they enjoyed made them feel competent and capable. These were fields where they could help people, draw on their cultural and linguistic knowledge as Latinas, and feel a sense of accomplishment and success by letting their "great characteristics shine through." (Neva, Aspire Group Post, November 6, 2011)

They were also selecting fields of study for which they could identify career outcomes and job security like teaching, nursing, and human services.

> Neva: I am not sure yet why i have chosen Nursing, I always have thought that helping people feel better and knowing the human body was my thing. I think my ultimate goal is to go to med school for OB-GYN however I am not for certain, i hope that in the long run i do fufill this goal. But for now Nursing is the way to go. (Aspire Group Post, November 6, 2011)

When Neva explained that she was "not sure yet why [she had] chosen Nursing" and then added that she had hoped to go to medical school in the long run but for now "Nursing is the way to go," she referenced an unspoken reality for many of the women: they could choose fields of study that tapped into their interests and passions, but they also needed to select majors that would lead them into the workforce with a Bachelor's degree.

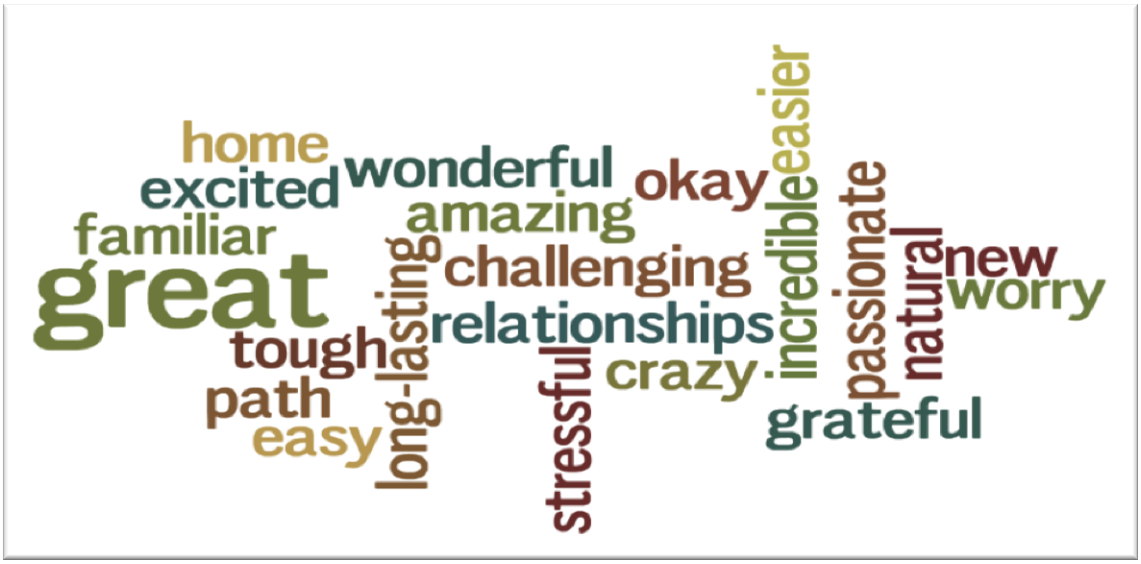
They imagined themselves in future professional careers: Chivas as a human services worker, Mariene as a businesswoman, Neva as a nurse and Teresa as a teacher. Their selection of majors and careers minimized the personal financial risks of college and their futures by ensuring that they would be successful in completing their degrees and prepared to enter the workforce in jobs related to their fields of study and viable as careers for people like them.

Entering their sophomore year, the women expressed excitement and confidence that they were on their way towards earning college degrees, as well as worries and stress about the

challenges of maintaining their enrollment. Figure 5 displays the words these young women used to describe life in their second year of college (the larger the font, the more frequently it was used).

Figure 5

Enrolled in school: Text cloud of words to describe life



In the first Facebook group post of the year, the young women described how their transition back to school (after summer break) was going. For some, the beginning of their sophomore year of college was an exciting and satisfying time because they knew what to expect. Chivas expressed gratitude for the opportunity to go to college even if balancing work, studies and family responsibilities could be stressful. She described that it felt "great" to be working hard in school.

> Chivas: My transition wasnt too bad i would say. i mean it was a bit harder than last year since i [thought I] already knew what i was aiming for and then i was somewhat slacking off the first couple of weeks but i must say i picked up my slack big time. for the past three weeks ive been working so hard and it feels great =) my classes are going good

> theres a couple that i am struggling with but im trying to hang in there. (Southside group page, October 15, 2010)

Like Chivas, the other young women in this group had some concerns but presented themselves as confident that even though they "worried about grades," had to make adjustments in how they managed the time, or took online courses to accommodate their work schedules, they were capable of meeting the demands of college enrollment.

> Genne: My transition wasnt bad at all. I already had an idea of what I had to do in order to get things done. This past week I was working really really hard on homework , i waited until last minute to do things and had to do it all by thursday... I am having some trouble managing my time but so far I have aced my exams. So far I like my classes ...and it feels really good to be back in school. (Chavez group page, October 15, 2010)

Their college and universities were more familiar places, and they had established relationships with people on campus. The women were moving on and up in their lives as they pursued their dreams and this came through in their posts.

> Teresa: It wasn't that bad. This summer went great and I was really excited to move back to [college town]. I am renting a house with three of my sorority sisters so moving back to [college town] wasn't as hard as it was last year! xD. (Southside group page, October 15, 2010)

Their commitment to completing college and the excitement that they were "on their way" were evident in their posts on the FREE Pathways group discussion page. Some of the women described how they saw the group posts as a kind of group journal or scrapbook that helped them to reflect on their college experiences and see how far they had come after high school graduation (Teresa, focus group, January 7, 2012).

I appreciated their group posts in a similar way because I could read the online archive of their posts as a narrative of their educational pathways. Their posts highlighted important moments, decisions, and feelings about their higher education experiences (including transferring, changing majors, renewing scholarships, receiving advice from mentors). Among FREE Pathways participants and researchers, group posts helped stabilize information about educational pathways including their enrollment, financial aid and trajectories through public colleges and universities.

Major Foundation Scholarships and Private Institutions

In group posts, I noticed that the women at public universities were expressing college life very differently than their friends and high school classmates who were at private colleges and universities. While the first group of women worried about financial aid, staying enrolled, earning money, and being prepared for a job once they finished college, the second group focused on exploring interests through coursework, joining clubs and campus activities, thinking about extended education in graduate school, developing professional experiences and contacts, and relaxing and having fun.

College life took on a different rhythm for the four women who were awarded major scholarships. Private foundations provided the young women economic and social capital that propelled them into elite colleges and universities. These scholarship required skillful management (i.e. renewal deadlines, volunteer hours, networking events) and also gave them advantages of generous financial aid packages and access to mentors and internships. In contrast to their peers who were juggling multiple funding sources, these women did not have to worry about whether they could afford to complete their degrees: they had time and support to develop their interests, allowing them to find courses that they felt passionate about, in majors where they

built connections to other students and faculty, and where they excelled academically and could imagine pursuing graduate studies.

As shown in Table 5, all of the women enrolled in private universities and colleges secured scholarship funding to cover the entirety of their tuition and fees and were already, in their sophomore year, exploring options for advanced degrees after completing their undergraduate studies.

Table 5

Participants who enrolled in private institutions with scholarships

Name	Enrollment Status	Finances	Trajectory
Razz	Private university	Tuition and fees covered by scholarships	Considering fifth year Master's program in business
Liz	Private liberal arts college	Tuition and fees covered by scholarships	Deciding between medical or graduate school in chemistry
Lizbeth	Private university	Tuition and fees covered by scholarships	Considering fifth year Master's program in education
Mikey	Private liberal arts college	Tuition and fees covered by scholarships	Exploring options for graduate school in psychology

Razz and Mikey (from Aspire High School) and Liz and Lizbeth (from Southside High School) were exploring careers through internships and extending their educational aspirations to graduate degrees in business (Razz), medicine and chemistry (Liz), education (Lizbeth), and psychology (Mikey). They selected majors based on a sense of excitement, accomplishment and

ability to complete courses successfully. For example, when we asked the young women, "What is your current major? Why have you chosen this major?" Lizbeth replied:

> I am an English major with hopefully being on track to get a masters in education. My first choice was not to major in English, but business. I knew it wasnt for me when I didnt feel as excited about my math class than writing papers. I always wanted to teach but always thought of different things that might make more money. At the end i realized it [teaching] is what truely makes me happy and satisfied with a career. I am excited about my future as a teacher because it is not only beneficial to me as a teacher but also as a mom. (Southside group post, November 6, 2013)

As Lizbeth explained her choice of major in education, she situated it within other options, including business and her realization that what "truly makes [her] happy" was how she should select her career and field of study. Her explanation continued: she explained how her career choice also made sense to her "as a mom." In interviews, she talked about how the benefits of scheduling and proximity to her young son made teaching an appealing career choice. Like Lizbeth, the other women in this group expressed that their selection of major and careers were choices where they considered their talents, interests and vision of what they would like their futures to be.

Their majors, careers and desires for graduate programs were also matched with opportunities to complete internships in their fields of interest. For example, Lizbeth said that her experience tutoring and completing school-based internships left "no doubt in [her] mind" that she would become a teacher.

> I have tutored and interned in schools and there is no doubt in my mind I will become a teacher. It is what I want to do because my teachers had a great impact on me and I want

> to do the same to others, believing education is truly what gets you any[thing] you want to get.... (Southside group post, November 6, 2013)

Lizbeth's internship was made possible through her scholarship program, which paid her for her time and provided resources to support her work in schools. Similarly, Liz and Razz were also matched with paid summer internship through their scholarship programs where they could learn first-hand about career options.

Some of the other women were directed towards graduate-preparation programs where they received resources and support in preparing their resumes and conducting research about graduate programs: they not only could consider what they wanted to do, they were provided with resources to get them there. When Mikey was asked about her second year of college she explained:

> Mikey: I am … taking more advantage of the school's resources. I'll be applying to go abroad for the spring of next year, and hopefully I'll be applying to be a McNair scholar either this summer or the next. (Aspire group post, November 13, 2010)

The women's awareness of and preparation for graduate school, through programs like the McNair scholarship program, which provided them with graduate school mentoring and paid internships, set them apart from the other women in the study.

Their scholarship programs also gave them more leeway in their schedules by alleviating time and financial pressures. The women were able to take additional coursework to add minors and specific areas of study.

> Razz: I'm majoring in accounting and international business. I'll have a minor in spanish as well. I chose accounting because I'm good with numbers and international business

> because it would only take a few extra classes to do so and minoring in spanish helps! (Aspire group post, November 6, 2010)

Like Razz, they described their majors not simply as career-oriented fields (like nursing or human services), but majors, minors and areas of study that would look good on their applications for graduate school and applications for professional careers in fields like business. For example, Razz added accounting and international business as specific focus areas for her business major with a minor in Spanish because it "would only take a few extra classes." Razz considered her Spanish-language skills as an asset for work in international business and that it would help her get a job. The women were taking advantage of the course offerings at their private universities, because with full scholarships, they had the financial resources to do so.

The young women also took advantage of the opportunities they had to participate in college life. Describing the transition from their first to second year, the women explained some of the changes they were making in their second year of college:

> Razz: No i'm not yet but I'm considering joining alpha kappa psi which is a national business fraternity. I think it would be great to be around other people interested [in] business to start networking and making friends with people who will be entering the business world after college.
>
> To manage the stress I always take time at the end of the day to just do something that i want to do. Whether it's watching one of my shows on hulu [an internet provider of television shows] or getting ice cream from this really cool local ice cream parlor. (Aspire group post, November 13, 2010)

> Liz: I have found my classes this year to be a bit more enjoyable because I am getting away from more of the intro classes and getting into the nitty-gritty stuff which is a bit more interesting however more challenging…. I have also learned to call quits when studying and to go relax and have fun. And as a result, I think the use of my time as been way more productive. (Southside group post, November 13, 2010)

By their sophomore year, the women were learning to enjoy college life more and knew when to "call it quits" and take breaks. Their scholarships had made living on the college campuses affordable, and their presence on campus helped them build networks of college peers through study groups, sororities, volunteer work, and time to "have fun" and "hang out."

Through mentoring, internships, financial security and time to participate in college life, the women were developing professional networks and preparing for graduate degrees in fields that developed their talents and passions.

Facebooking College Pathways

The young women's expanding social networks and access to college cultural capital were reflected on their Facebook pages. While the group posts provided a narrative of their strategies, a record of their educational trajectories and social networks, and an account of their plans for the future, many of these details also percolated onto their Facebook information pages and walls. For the women who were fully enrolled in college, Facebook highlighted, and allowed them to highlight, their college "credentials," including professional affiliations (sororities and honor societies), their progress toward career goals (internships, impressive summer jobs, etc.), their special professional skills (bilingualism), and their physical attractiveness (profile photos and shared albums).

Information Pages

Their information pages displayed their status as students and their expanding social networks and professional experiences; they served as virtual resumés that listed certain kinds of statuses, affiliations, and preferences. For example, Chivas' information page detailed her college enrollment, major, relationship status, and bilingualism:

> Chivas
>
> Studying Spanish at [public university] Lives in[college town], Colorado In a relationship with RP Knows english/ spanish, English, Spanglish, El lenguaje del amor From [Denver-locality], Colorado Born on December xx, 1990

Like Chivas, the young women who were fully enrolled in college listed their enrollment in colleges and universities, associations with scholarship foundations, and skills and experiences in professional organizations on their information pages. Facebook summarized their "Education and Work" experiences into a short description that displayed under their name on both their information page and wall page.

> Mikey
>
> Studies at [private college] From Denver, Colorado
>
> Friends (324)
>
> Education and Work
>
> College [private college] '13
>
> High School Aspire High School
>
> (Mikey information page, May 20, 2011)

As in the example from Mikey's page above, "Education and Work" is a prominent category for identifying information on the site along with a profile photo, a listing of their hometown, and the number of friends they had connected to on Facebook. (Although I cannot display the women's profile pictures, they generally were a snapshot that included the women's head and shoulders and showed the women as attractive, feminine and happy.)

The women who were recipients of major foundational scholarships and enrolled at private universities had greater access to internships and professional organizations and displayed these affiliations as well. For example, Razz listed a business internship she held at a major telecommunications company in Denver under "Education and Work" as well as her knowledge of American English and Spanish (interestingly, she did not list her family's home language: Timni).

Razz

Worked at [ ] Communications (Intern) Studies at [private university] Knows American English, Spanish From Denver, Colorado Born on March 29

Friends (483)

Education and Work

Employers [ ] Communications May 2010 to August 2010 Intern

College [private university] '13

High School Aspire High School '09

(Razz information page, May 18, 2011)

Likewise, Liz included both her college and high school and listed in her "networks" two foundations where she had been selected for prestigious scholarships.

Liz

Studies at [private university] Born on February 16

Friends (509)

Education and Work

College [private university] Class of 2013

High School Southside High School Class of 2009

Networks

[scholarship foundation 1]

[scholarship foundation 2]

(Liz information page, May 25, 2011)

Mikey, Razz and Liz could amplify their college, professional and scholarship networks by listing them on Facebook. This information reflected their social ties to prestigious colleges, universities, companies and foundations and helped them to create a professional resumé-like listing that established them as members of these networked groups.

Wall Pages

The women indexed their engagement in college life on their wall pages as they posted about some of the mundane aspects of their college enrollment—like that they were preparing for a test or studying in the library. Some of the status updates provided information about their

involvement in campus life and displayed their enjoyment and participation in college. In the examples below, Liz and Teresa documented some of their college experiences.

> Liz: my professor stopped professing so I'm stoked for my hour long presentation. Tea is wonderful, Asian Culture Show will be super fun and Taiwan is in less than a week!!!! [Liz was about to leave on a college-sponsored trip to Taiwan]
>
> Love life ♥ April 15, 2011 at 12:33am
>
> 10 people like this.

> Teresa: Why can't people understand that the library is me[a]nt to study n be quiet instead of a time to catch up with [e]very body that passes by!! Ugh
>
> November 17, 2010 at 1:36pm via Text Message ·
>
> 4 people like this.

Liz shared her excitement about upcoming coursework in Asian studies and Teresa complained about other students who were making too much noise in the university library. In these posts, the young women transported their status as college students onto their walls and garnered attention from their Facebook friends. These posts sometimes documented the lessons the women were learning about navigating college, as in Lizbeth's post about having studied for a class and then finding out that it had been cancelled:

> Lizbeth
>
> Note to self: Next time, before finishing, NO- before starting your homework..check your email. You never know, that class might be cancelled Monday morning!!!! lol.
>
> May 15, 2011 at 9:12pm

Other times, the women reached out to their networks to ask for help with an assignment. For example, while working on a final paper for one of her classes, Mikey asked for ideas from her Facebook "friends."

> Mikey
>
> Does anyone know the titles of any racist, imperialistic, or culturally insensitive contemporary children's picture books?
>
> April 28, 2011 at 6:54pm

They often posted during mid-term and final exams when they were both nervous and excited to find out how they would fare in their courses.

In the posts below, Chivas, Mariene, and Neva celebrated doing well on their final exams and excelling in school. They listed the subjects they took and created images of themselves "acing" exams and classes, meaning that they were earning high marks on their assignments and exams.

> Chivas: Aced my Human Sexuality final... Aced Spanish and therefore dont have to take the final! History of Mexico, Biology, and Human Services prepare to be DOMINATED!!!! Chyeaaaa bring it =)
>
> May 2 at 1:55pm

> Neva: Hecks yes got a 96% on my chem quiz and a 90% on my psych test I'm on a roll
>
> March 8 at 7:57pm via BlackBerry (Neva wall page, March 8, 2011)

> Adilene: Chemistry feels so great when you get it! haha Oh chemistry chemistry, your so interesting. November 24, 2010 at 10:21am (Adilene wall page, November, 24 2010

They used language like “dominating,” “owning” and “burying” tests to show their mastery of the material, the demands of college, and their good student identities. These posts presented their success in school as bringing them pleasure. After earning high marks on her chemistry and psychology exams, Neva described herself as being “on a roll.” Adilene posted that “Chemistry feels so great when you get it” as she studied for one of her biochemistry courses. The posts the young women shared about school showed both that doing well in college was important to them, and it made them feel good about themselves and happy.

The women also used their status updates on wall pages to document important moments in their educational success. For those who were accessing internship opportunities, considering graduate school and developing professional networks, they could relay these accomplishments to their social networks. For example, Mikey posted her acceptance to a graduate-school oriented mentoring program (McNair) and Mariene revealed that she had been accepted to transfer to another public university closer to her family.

> Mikey: I just got my acceptance letter to the McNair program....WOOT WOOT!!!!
> April 15 at 5:36pm ·
>
> High School Friend and 17 others like this.
>
> Mariene: Has officially been accept[ed] to [public university]!!!! :)
>
> May 9, 2011 at 4:09pm ·
>
> 14 people like this.
>
> High School Friend: woo hoo that's awesome congratulations'
>
> May 9, 2011 at 4:13pm

Their posts garnered comments, "likes" and attention from their high school friends, college peers and family members. Through their posts they created records of their status as college students that were visible to their social networks and on a platform where their known social ties commented and offered encouragement.

Becoming Minorities on Campus

Many of the young women felt marginalized on campuses as they were positioned as "minorities." The women who were at private colleges and private and public universities—all but one of which are predominantly White—talked about feeling this isolation more acutely than their peers at community colleges and regional public universities where there were more students who shared their socio-economic, immigration and ethnic backgrounds.

One way the women described their emerging sense of being a minority was through programs, such as early access and special supports, which were offered to them because they were minority students on campus. While these programs were beneficial, they sometimes created false impressions of campus diversity and made the young women feel singled out on campus. Liz explained how programs intended to make "minorities" like her feel more comfortable on campus provided both safe spaces and furthered her sense of alienation on campus.

> When I first got to [my college] it was really, they had a program called Bridge, and at first I didn't know why they were calling just a few of us here, and at first I really didn't notice that it was all minorities and it, and I was like, "This is such a diverse school. [laughs]" But, and then so, that was interesting because [my college] has a problem with kind of like minorities, and just ,I guess, getting into the [college] culture and what not, and so they invited students here to get, to just be more, familiar with the school and like

> look around [at] what resources we have around here. So that was pretty big. I guess just I learned how, I guess, I'm still a little bit conflicted because of like, even though it's like really nice for them and it makes us aware that it's different, I don't know, but it's also like makes us feel alienated from the rest of the school kind of in a sense. (Interview, February 11, 2012)

Liz described how the Bridge program first gave her the impression that her college was very diverse, but then left her feeling "conflicted" because even though it was "nice" of the college to try and support the "minority" students on campus, it also left her feeling "alienated" from the rest of the school.

Similarly, Mikey felt that in efforts to promote diversity on campus, her school's administration had misrepresented the campus demographics to her and created a climate that fostered segregation and diminished her sense of belonging on campus.

> Their diversity is kind of weird, they don't even like, like the diversity isn't even race and sexual orientation, it is class and it's like location, like Midwest and East Coast, and so it's kind of like you weren't, you not really expecting it. And you're like "wow" they have all this diversity at the school and then when you go it's like, oh yeah we've got like 30% of our kids are from the East Coast and it's like, I mean it's like diversity, but it's not like what comes to people's minds.

> I went to visit the school, and, it was just like, I saw like a lot of minorities there. And then when I was talking to one of my friends, she graduated this year, she was in like the administration and she like scheduled all the student visits and stuff. She was basically saying [the college] does that on purpose, they'll invite like the minority kids a different

> weekend then the other kids, and then like the socials that they have, they'll invite like the minority groups to come to the, to the socials for the new kids and, so it's not like, everybody goes and you get to like see the real demographics of the school, they invite certain groups [and] certain people to see the school during that time… so, it's kind of crappy. (Interview, June 7, 2011)

While the college administration was using geographic regions as categories of "diversity," Mikey felt that her college's recruitment efforts were misleading, and that their definition of diversity was "weird." As students of color on campus, first generation students and students from low-income families, the college's recruitment efforts left them feeling "conflicted," "alienated" and skeptical of their college's misleading and inadequate efforts to promote diversity on campus.

Facebooking Supportive Social Ties

Previous studies about college students' use of Facebook document the importance of the social media site in helping students transition to college life by maintaining relationships with family and high school friends (maintained ties) and enhancing the strength of their ties to college peers (bridging ties) (see boyd and Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al., 2009). This was true for the FREE Pathways women who were at public and private institutions.

Exchanges with "maintained" ties from home and "bridging" ties with new college acquaintances were important for the women's perseverance in college. These forms of social capital carried were important for the women in this study because their pathways exposed them to marginalization and minoritization on predominantly White campuses.

The young women's positioning on college campuses as "minorities" led to an ongoing negotiation of marginalized student identities. The young women relied on support systems of

high school friends, families, and other minority students as they navigated institutions and interpersonal exchanges that brought into question whether they belonged and were capable of academic success on campus. Tara Yosso (2006) characterizes this type of social capital as an important form of cultural wealth that students of color need to persist in higher educational settings.

Over the course of their sophomore year in 2010-2011, the women frequently posted on their wall pages, and their high school friends, family members and college peers would often reply. These posts created an additional 2,224 posts on the women's walls. Of these messages from friends and family, 67% (1,481) were made by high school friends and family and 33% were made by college friends. The young women used Facebook primarily to maintain contact with and knowledge of families and hometown friends, and to some extent with new college friends.

For example, Adilene elaborated on the importance of her campus-support network, or "bridging" social ties, when she explained how she became involved in a Latina sorority and how her social ties helped her cope with the "culture shock" of being a science major at a predominantly White public university.

> Adilene: So, practically what they are about is um like that we are the minority. Like a lot of times, at first, I really didn't think that it was going to, that I was going to have that culture shock, I guess. But now that I'm in the sciences, a science major, like they look differently at me, so like they gave me like, like everyone I know, like the majority was White. And at times like you would leave, like you would have that feeling that like, like you weren't smart enough, or when like I would want to talk to like other people like just other people, just like those little things like that. So, sometimes, actually I just actually

got kind of discouraged because it was like harder for me, so I decided to join [the sorority].

Interviewer: Has your sense of belonging or fitting in on campus changed?

A: Yeah, I think it definitely changed for me, um, because, um, I feel like now I just have like more people I can relate to. Like I can't have the excuse "oh, I'm the only one" or like I can't, now I feel like I have like I have with me a group of girls that feel the same. So I … think with them I've made more experiences with the Deans, and also just like getting more involved with student groups. I've just gotten like a lot more connections, um, from teachers also, and like teacher recommendations from them that they've already taken the classes I've taken or that I'm going to take, so like a lot of advice um, so yeah. I think that I've been introduced more to like, to be more social, and I've also met like really good people from that, too. (Interview, May 24, 2011)

As Adilene describes, the women's formation of social networks on campus were an important feature of their resilience and persistence on college campuses. Facebook helped reinforce these supportive social ties and one-third of their Facebook exchanges took place with these new bridging ties.

Staying in Touch

Needing to maintain relationships with friends and family when they were away on college campuses or dealing with demanding work schedules, many of the young women also emphasized that Facebook helped them to "stay in touch" with friends and family. Teresa described how she used Facebook to stay in touch with some of her high school friends (Lizbeth and Adilene), high school teachers, the FREE program, and her sister.

> Facebook, um, I use it more to talk to like people I don't see very often, like Lizbeth and Adilene, that's our, that's where we communicate the most. … [On Facebook] I talk to a lot of family members from Mexico. I still talk to my high school teachers through Facebook, and then I do the FREE program, which is cool. (Interview, February 8, 2012)

Teresa described Facebook as a technology she used to maintain relationships with friends and teachers from high school and with her family.

For the women who had moved away from home and were attending residential universities and colleges as first generation students, viewing profiles of high school friends and family members allowed them to feel connected to important sources of support. For example. Chivas explained that relationships with friends and family "at home" were closely tied to the "moral support" she needed while away at college. Chivas felt a "distance" in her relationships from home the longer she was away at college. She needed reassurance from her family and friends that "everything was going to be ok," both in her studies and at home.

> I guess at the moment, it's basically just like moral support. Just because it, it is my junior year and it's getting a little tougher, so, I do find that, there's somewhat of a distance between like my friends, like at home, and my family, at a certain point.
>
> I guess it's just that, that's the main thing I need is just to know that things are going to be okay, and if they can just tell me like I can do it, then, that keeps me strong. (Interview, February 16, 2012)

She explained that Facebook was an important way to get this support because she could read her friends' and family members' wall pages and find out about what was going on in their lives. Facebook helped ease the geographic distance between her and her family and give her

emotional support. The women leveraged Facebook to access and maintain kinship and older friendship networks in order to "stay strong" while away at college.

Facebook mediated the women's maintenance of support social ties from their home communities and supported their access to new relationships with college peers. Functioning as a node in their networks of support, they used the site as a resource for maintaining and accessing the social ties and cultural capital they needed to find success in college.

Conclusion

For the women who were able to realize their goals of attending four-year institutions, financial resources played a pivotal role in determining what types of institutions and experiences would be accessible for them. Financial assistance from public aid programs and private foundations made college possible, while additional supports through mentoring, internships and graduate school preparations gave the women different access to college and professionally-oriented social and cultural capital. Facebook helped stabilize information about their different pathways and resources and helped reinforce their positioning as college students.

Yet, the women's stories about being minoritized on predominantly White campuses suggested that their college pathways contributed to racialized and socio-economically classed positionalities. In response, the women not only displayed their success in accomplishing goals of pursuing four-year college degrees, but used the social media site as a tool for accessing essential sources of support. The site helped them maintain ties with high school friends and family and reinforced their connection to college peer networks—sources of encouragement that helped them "stay strong."

CHAPTER VII

FACEBOOKING FROM THE MARGINS

Introduction

With similar high school preparation as the women who were thriving in four-year institutions, eight more women found themselves on the margins of higher education, carefully negotiating time and finances as they considered colleges and majors where they had a better chance of maintaining their enrollment and completing degrees. Despite their success in high school and commitment to earning college degrees, they were either not enrolled in higher education at all or struggling to maintain enrollment in community college. Their stories highlight college trajectories that were dramatically shaped by financial resources and left half of the women in this study disappointed, frustrated and hoping that someday they would accomplish their goal of earning college degrees.

In this chapter, I discuss the educational pathways of women on the margins: those who were struggling to maintain at least part-time enrollment in community colleges and those who were not enrolled in college at all. I examine how the women participated on Facebook, paying particular attention to what the women posted in response to FREE Pathways questions, what they shared publically, and how they used Facebook in their everyday lives. Their use of Facebook was different than the women who were fully enrolled in higher education, both in the kinds of information they provided in group posts compared to interviews, and their ability to display college and professionally-oriented social and cultural capital. For women who felt they were falling short of their educational aspirations, Facebook participation could be uncomfortable since it reminded them of educational opportunities they were missing.

On the Margins of Higher Education

Entry and Exit: Inadequate Financial Resources

In the 2010-2011 school year, Sophia and three of her classmates from Chavez High School were struggling to realize their dreams of college attendance. Sophia and her high school classmate Jayde had only enrolled for one semester. Two more of their classmates, Stephie and Aerith, were not enrolled in college at all. All three women had done well in high school, graduated near the top of their class, and had planned on attending college after high school. Yet in their own ways, each of them encountered barriers to college enrollment that led them to delay enrollment or withdraw within a year of beginning college. I have summarized their educational pathways in Table 6.

While all of these women had applied and been accepted to public colleges and universities, like Sophia they were not enrolled in 2010-2011. Sophia attended a public university for one semester, but then withdrew in her first year because of health concerns and worries about the debt she was incurring. She decided to transfer to a community college closer to home. Unfortunately, once she returned home, she had difficulty securing financial aid and balancing full time work with school. Even though she worked closely with a financial aid counselor, she was not able to obtain financial aid for the spring 2010 semester because her application continued to be denied. Despite this setback, she continued to meet with financial aid counselors at the community college where she was applying so they could help her submit her Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) paperwork. She enrolled in classes at a local community college in the fall of 2010 but was then involuntarily dropped from her classes because her financial aid disbursement was made after the add-drop period.

Table 6

Participants not enrolled in college

Name	Enrollment Status	Finances	Anticipated Trajectory[a]
Sophia	Enrolled at a public university for one semester (fall 2009), hoping to major in Forensic Science, then not enrolled after spring 2010.	Received federal financial aid as grants and loans for first semester only.	After loss of financial aid, planned to transfer to community college, but had trouble with FAFSA.
Jayde	Did not enroll in fall 2009, then enrolled in a private university for one semester (spring 2011) hoping to major in International Business.	Not eligible for financial aid, paid tuition and fees from own income.	After trying a private university, planned to transfer to state university, didn't think classes at the private university were worth the expense.
Stephie	Enrolled in a public university hoping to major in aerospace engineering but withdrew before classes started her freshman year (fall 2009).	No financial aid or scholarships	Working while trying to figure out how to re-enroll. She has little information about what programs might interest her and how to navigate financial aid options.
Aerith	Enrolled at a public university for one year (2009-2010), majoring in Criminal Justice. Not enrolled in 2010-2011.	Couldn't pay share of tuition, left with a $3,000 unpaid bill.	Trying to figure out how to pay tuition bill from first year so her credits will transfer. In the meantime, working and trying to figure out how to pay for school.

[a] Anticipated Trajectory: summary of what women reported in interviews and focus groups about their college enrollment status and plans for the future.

A year later, in the fall 2010, Sophia had still not been able to re-enroll in college after leaving university with plans to transfer to a community college near her family. She had also changed her major from Forensic Science, a degree she was excited about but one the community college did not offer, to an Associate of Science, which the community college offered. She described her future plans in a group post:

> I plan to enroll at [community college] probably next fall, maybe sooner. ideally i would not be in colorado but its hard to say when I'm going to get out of here. i met with a financial aid counselor last week who walked me through the fafsa, now we wait. im not sure at all what my major should be, at [community college] its associate of science but i ask myself everyday what i want to do and everyday its different. (Chavez group page, November 6, 2010)

Sophia had started working forty hours per week at a nursing home, earning enough money to help support her mother, sister and baby niece who lived with them. Yet she found that re-entering college was difficult given her work and family obligations. For example, in September 2010, we asked the young women who were not enrolled in college to give three adjectives to best describe their lives. In a post that FREE Pathways researchers and Sophia's classmates from Chavez High School could read, Sophia replied that her life had been "stressful, chaotic, [and] frustrating." She explained that work and family were "taking up most of [her] days," and it was difficult for her to make the transition back to school:

> I haven't been able to get back in school but at least i recently got a job. It's really hard to make time for anything fun now that working takes up most of my days but at least I'm helping out the family. I want to go back to school though and hopefully I will be able to

keep my job and do well in school when I do go back. (Chavez group page, October 15, 2010)

The women's responses to this question reflected the importance of educational success (higher education) to them and to how they presented themselves to the researchers and their FREE peers at this point in their lives. In particular, these responses revealed that their positioning with regard to higher education contributed to their feelings of self-worth. Figure 6 displays the women's descriptions of their life in the year after high school graduation as a text cloud, with the ones used more commonly displayed in larger fonts.

Figure 6

Margins of higher education: Text cloud of words to describe life

Like Sophia, Aerith, Stephie and Jayde felt stress, frustration, boredom and disorientation about not being enrolled in college: they described life as "stagnant, boring, listless, stressful, chaotic, frustrating; boring, stressful, average; random, interesting, crazy."

> Aerith: Stagnent, boring, listless. The big change: I was unable to go back to school due to financial issues. it's about that time when my student loans are going to rape me. I'm going to take some time off to pay off all the ton of money I owe.

> Stephie: boring, stressful, average. Nothing in my life has change at all. I still work at the same place for the past year, but i am still planning on attending school as soon as i can.
>
> Jayde: Random, interesting, crazy. Since last spring, I've become more organized with my money and my life as well. Although before it was pretty chaotic, I've had to understand the value of money and why having organization skills help. I work 2 jobs and i keep myself busy reading and being active. I'm really interested in going back to school I'm looking into [a private] University. (Chavez group page, October 15, 2010)

The women's presentation of themselves to the FREE researchers and each other highlighted that they were trying to "right" their situations by trying to figure out how they would negotiate paying for school while balancing their educational plans with work schedules and family obligations.

As they replied to our questions, the group posts helped stabilize information about the young women's educational trajectories, especially the prominent and disconcerting role financial resources played in determining whether the women would be able to enroll in college. Once on the margins of higher education, the young women focused their attention on selecting colleges they could afford while minimizing debt, more often considering vocational and community colleges as their only option. Like Sophia, the other women also described their plans to re-enter school, always emphasizing that this would be contingent on earning or finding enough "money."

> Stephie: I plan to enroll in school as soon as i can but money is still an issue. I will most likely go to a community college close to where i live and work. I still plan on majoring in engineering and maybe teaching. (Chavez group page, October 15, 2010)

> Aerith: I most def[initely] plan on going back to school. I might have to take more time off than I wanted but it is what it is. I might have to do some community college to help with the cost of school. Maybe [community college]. (Chavez group page, October 15, 2010)

For Sophia, Stephie, and Aerith their engagement with higher education was mainly about managing their entry into and exits from colleges and universities. For Stephie, it meant waiting until money was no longer "an issue." For Aerith, school meant taking more time off than "she wanted" and doing "some community college" to help reduce the cost. Even though she still wanted to "get out of here [Colorado]" and attend an out-of-state university, Sophia also looked to a local community college for help accessing federal financial aid (FAFSA) and providing some college coursework, even though she didn't know what she wanted to study anymore.

Finding schools that they could afford and attend while continuing to work became priorities, and more salient than concerns about grades or majors. Many were unsure about what they would ultimately study and selected majors and degrees based on what was available (e.g. Associate of Science) rather than their interests and career plans.

The replies that Sophia and her high school classmates made to the group discussion posts helped document the women's experiences of not being in school, and also indicated that many of the questions the FREE Pathways research team was asking the women to answer were important to our study but not necessarily comfortable for them; the young women and I knew that their answers were not necessarily appropriate or common on Facebook. As a result, their posts often noted but did not elaborate on their challenges in accessing higher education. For example, when Sophia noted that "money is still an issue" or Aerith mentioned that community college might help "with the cost," they provided information about their enrollment status,

referenced their need for adequate financial resources, and did so without divulging many details of the challenges they were facing.

While Sophia and Aerith gave abbreviated descriptions of their financial difficulties on Facebook, they would talk at greater length in interviews about their frustrations with not being in school and about their financial difficulties. For example, Sophia explained that she received conflicting information from the financial aid office at her community college, which ultimately delayed her enrollment for months as she was denied financial aid and then had to wait for an appointment with financial aid counselors.

> Sophia: Honestly, I've had some trouble with [the financial aid office]. I felt like I was getting the wrong information for a while. Like, I would get told to do one thing [on the financial aid website] and wait until I got a response and then I [would find out that I had] done the wrong thing. So, I had a meeting with an actual financial aid officer because the people [I was talking to on the phone] like really didn't really know. I don't know if they didn't know my specific case, but when I sat down with somebody who actually look through all of my paperwork and figured out my like my personal information and my situation they were able to help me more.
>
> I had to call and set up a meeting and it took a while. I had to wait for a little over a month because they were booked for a while. But I had to schedule and meeting time with them and then just go and sit down and actually talk to them. And they help me figure out my financial aid situation, which is good because I don't think I would've figured it out on my own. I'm glad it did work out, so I guess I am satisfied because they were able to help me [eventually]. (Interview, June 8, 2011)

Similarly, Aerith elaborated in her frustration with of not being in school, her efforts to figure out her finances, and her thinking about going back to school,

> Aerith: I'm definitely gonna go back [to school], that's for sure. I can't think of anything else that I'd rather do- so I'm sure that I'll stick to the same major [criminal justice]. I am- it's just so expensive, I don't know, I don't know go how to go about it sometimes but I really need to just go do it and then it will be done. But, I, I'm positive that all go back to school and get my degree and do something.
>
> The thing that I really liked about college is that I was actually learning and I had to use my mind, and write research papers. I could use my mind to do it, learn all this. I am, I'm not sure that challenging would be the word for it, but I was using my mind, I was using my brain and that's what I'm going for. So, now I'm just waiting for something to challenge me.
>
> I started working at my job and, it only took a few months before I had learned everything at the front end, and then I would go to work at I would just be bored, and miserable and I would just hate my life because it's the same thing if the same thing that I do day after day like 40 hours a week. That's where like at the point where the like my mind is wasting away because I wasn't learning anything else, I was just doing the same thing over and over again and that's frustrating. Yeah, I don't like that. (Aerith, Interview December 23, 2010).

In interviews, the young women would provide more detailed information about their financial concerns and frustration with life out of college. In interviews and personal emails and more private Facebook messages, the women would also ask for help with scholarships,

recommendations for colleges and financial aid applications. However, we kept these conversations off of the group, wall and information pages because they contained information that the women did not necessarily want to be shared on more public and visible pages.

As a researcher and the Facebook "friend" asking the questions, I was sometimes reticent to ask these women in FREE Pathways about their educational status and plans knowing that we were continuing to ask them about an area of their life that could be demoralizing and saddening to talk about. Our questions were often posted for "students" and "non-students," and I worried that our different questions and categories for the women, while intended to keep the women who were not in school included, caused a form of "class injury" (Bettie, 2003) by forcing the women who were not in school to position themselves with respect to the other women who were in school. It seemed that our categories and questions might imply that they ought to be in school and made them feel that they should be doing more to "right" their situation.[7]

"Choosing" Community College

Mirele and three other women who had been strong students with high expectations in high school were enrolled in college but had scaled back their expectations, either by attending only part-time or enrolling at a community college instead of a university. Table 7 summarizes the educational pathways Mirele, Tatum, Genne and Ana took as they made difficult decisions about how to fulfill their dreams of earning college degrees.

[7] This discrepancy did not exist among women who were fully enrolled in colleges and universities.

Table 7

Participants who reduced enrollment in college

Name	Enrollment Status	Finances	Trajectory
Mirele	Reduced enrollment at regional community college from full time to two classes per semester. She hoped to major in Art or Foreign Languages.	Scholarship program first year, then it was discontinued	Relying on family and friends, only 1 or 2 classes per semester, unsure how long it will take her to complete an Associate degree.
Tatum	Enrolled in a local community college under high school dual enrollment program. She majored in Biology.	Not eligible for public financial aid, couldn't afford university	Associate of Science degree will be completed in May 2011, then 1ooking at options to receive four-year degree and go to medical school.
Genne	Attended public university satellite campus near her home and majored in Human Services.	Several scholarships and family contribution. She was not eligible for financial aid	Planned to decrease course load when transferring to main campus because of increased tuition costs and health insurance requirement.
Ana	Completed first year at a public university, hoping to major in Business. Then transferred to a community college close to her family and hoped to major in Nursing.	Received federal loans, grants and family support. After her father passed away she relied on his life insurance.	Academic difficulty, reconsidering major and degree programs.

Mirele, Tatum, and Genne had attended different high schools, but shared the same dilemma: they had moved from Mexico with their families when they were young children and

were not legal residents in the United States. In Colorado, students who graduated from Colorado high schools but lacked proper documentation to be in the United States had to pay out-of-state tuition without any public financial aid. This state law was adopted while the young women were growing up, repeatedly challenged during their high school years but never overturned or amended; this made four-year degrees prohibitively expensive for them.[8]

One option available to some Colorado students was to delay their high school graduation and take advantage of the state's dual enrollment program. Through this arrangement, their school districts would pay for them to take community college courses at in-state tuition rates. In effect, they could extend their high school careers, earn college credit, work towards an Associate's degree and temporarily circumvent the punitive tuition policies related to their legal status. While this gave the women some access to college coursework, it also diverted them away from four-year universities by directing them into community colleges.

Mirele participated in one of these programs and attended a local community college. During her freshman year, she was part of a dual enrollment scholarship program for undocumented students that delayed her high school graduation so that her college tuition was covered. The program was the main reason she had selected a community college instead of a regional four-year university. Unfortunately, by her second year in the program, the program had been discontinued. Mirele was told that this was because many of the students had not earned good enough grades; she had earned all As.

Mirele was soft-spoken and did her best to reflect her satisfaction about being enrolled in the community college because she enjoyed having a connection to a college learning environment.

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[8] In March 2013, the Colorado State Legislature passed ASSET; a bill that would provide undocumented Colorado high school graduates a reduced tuition rate slightly higher than in-state tuition rates but considerably lower than out-of state rates.

> Mirele: I do think college is an excellent fit for me! ^-^ I enjoy going to my classes and i do get along pretty well with my professors and especially with my Chinese teacher. ^-^ (Southside Group Post, December 15, 2010)

After her first year of college, she relied on her family and friends to help pay her tuition and decreased her course enrollment from four courses to one or two per semester to reduce the cost of attendance. She enjoyed her classes but found that her enrollment was jeopardized by not having the financial resources to pay for her tuition.

> Mirele: My college life is going pretty well right now. The class that i find the most fun and the most challenging is my Chinese class. Next semester will be my last Chinese class. The rest of my classes are going pretty well, I'm getting good grades. The thing that's most stressful is the thought that I'm not sure how I'll be able to pay for my classes next semester. -.-' (Southside Group Post, October 22, 2010)

Because after her first year she had to pay out-of-state tuition with no access to federal financial aid and most scholarships, she struggled to afford the $465 per tuition hour, or approximately $1000 of tuition per course. In her second year of college, Mirele borrowed money from family members, but by the end of her second year, she had to drop her Chinese class, the subject she enjoyed most, because she could only afford the tuition for her required core classes.

> This semester I was taking Chinese, Math, U.S. History and a Psychology class. They were all pretty interesting except math. I had to drop Chinese though because it was too expensive and they were going to drop me out of all my classes if I didn't pay. So I had to drop one and pay for the others. (Southside Group Post, June 7, 2011)

Mirele's community college attendance and part-time enrollment left her uncertain about how many years it would be before she could complete an Associate's Degree, let alone the Bachelor's Degree she desired.

Finances forced Mirele, Genne and Tatum to worry constantly about being able to develop their talents, about paying for the courses they needed, and having to delay graduation. The women struggled to find ways to have the time and money needed to work toward their degrees and develop their talents. For example, Tatum explained that her high school-college dual enrollment program "bought" her some time to get her Associate of Science degree. But as she neared completion of this two-year degree, she acknowledged that she was satisfied with her degree because it was one step closer to a career in medicine. However, an Associate Degree did not meet her educational or career goals.

> Tatum: I am very satisfied. I mean, I can sit there and I'm like, "I have my Associates in Science," I mean I can't sit there and get a job until I get my Bachelors but I have my Associates. I have Associates of Science and I'm like what can [I] work at? And I'm like, "Oh I don't know, I don't think I can work in anything, it's just two years." And I guess that's about the only concern I have, is that, I laugh it away. I felt smart. And that's all that matters. (Interview, May 26, 2011)

Tatum was satisfied that she had earned a two-year degree, but she felt that her degree did little to help her access work in "anything" in the medical field. With few alternatives, she claimed to "laugh" away this concern, reconciling that "she felt smart and that's all that matters." Really, what Tatum desired was funding and time to complete an advanced degree in medicine.

She had few options since she could not access financial aid and the cost of higher education was crippling without U.S. legal residency. When I asked her about how she thought she might pay for the rest of her schooling she explained:

> Tatum: I -I don't know, like I don't know how I'm going to handle that. My dad told me he would be able to use his retirement fund to basically pay for my college. But I, I don't want to use that, I mean not his retirement fund. I mean, it's not, it's going to cover only about a semester. I'm like, I don't know, but I- I am really just up in the air. I think that's why I sat there and like I think I'm going to take the fall semester [off].
>
> I: Have you been able to talk to admissions or financial aid at any of the schools you are considering?
>
> T: No I haven't, I need to. ..I don't want to call them and ask them just because I know they're going to sit there and question me like well what's next and I'm not ready. I'm really up in the air right now I don't know what's next, I know what I want to do but I don't know if it's going to be possible. (Interview, May 26, 2011)

Tatum's family had offered to contribute her father's retirement savings, but she was hesitant to draw on what savings her family did have, especially since she had calculated that it would cover only about a semester of her tuition. As a result, she postponed her enrollment in a four-year university and avoided talking to financial aid and admission officers. Despite "knowing what she wanted to do," she "didn't know if it was going to be possible" for her to complete a four-year degree or go to medical school to become a doctor.

This group of women hoped that they would be able to complete college in majors they desired: Mirele knew that she needed time to master the foreign languages (Chinese, French and Korean) she was studying, Tatum needed substantial financial resources to pursue a career in medicine, and Genne worried about how she would be able to afford the more expensive higher-level courses on her university's main campus.

The young women expressed a need for time to complete their degrees before financial resources "ran out;" they selected majors and courses where they were confident that they could earn passing grades; and they tried to move as efficiently towards graduation as possible. They could manage the financial burden but not always for as long as it might take them to complete their degrees. Just two years out of high school, these young women worried about whether they could complete their majors in four years, and if not, how long would it take them to graduate in majors they declared.

The women shared the details of their educational struggles in interviews, but did not disclose their legal status, the details of their financial concerns, or their desire to be on a more certain trajectory to earning four-year degrees on Facebook group posts. It seemed that they engaged in a form of impression management in front of their high school classmates: they answered the questions we asked about college climate, coursework and future plans by providing answers that highlighted their successes in earning good grades and completing coursework.

For example at the beginning of the 2010 fall semester, we asked "How is the transition from your summer routine to college classes again going?" Mirele described that it felt "natural" to be back in school, Tatum said that her "academic life remained the same," and Genne described it as "not bad."

> Mirele: The summer was nice. it felt a bit long but i didn't want it to end. Going back to college felt sort of natural. Everything just fell into place. Also, I'm doing pretty well in my classes xD (Southside group post, October 15, 2010)

> Genne: My transition wasnt bad at all. I already had an idea of what I had to do in order to get things done. This past week I was working really really hard on homework , i waited until last minute to do things and had to do it all by thursday... I am having some trouble managing my time but so far I have aced my exams. So far I like my classes ...and it feels really good to be back in school. (Chavez group post, October 15, 2010)

> Tatum: This semester I decided to take all night classes and well it went great at the beginning I don't like it as much anymore. Other than that my academic life has remained the same. (Aspire group post, October 15, 2010)

They were enjoying the personal enrichment of being in school, but these posts did not reveal the uncertainty they described in interviews about their future plans. In interviews, Mirele often cried at the first question about her college experiences, and Tatum would later describe to me that going to community college and having no idea when she would be able to earn a four-year degree made her feel as if her dreams had been put on "pause" (personal communication, August 2012). These young women were left to hope that something might change in the education and political systems that would help them restart their educational endeavors.

Reinforcing Marginal Social Positioning on Facebook

The women's participation on FREE Pathways group pages was directed by our research team, and the topics of discussion were often college-oriented (talk about college, future plans and social networks). These topics complemented some of the normative practices on Facebook,

which privileged college and professional-oriented social capital. In particular, information pages were formatted to display college networks, and talk about school among peers on Facebook walls reinforced aspects of their social positioning with respect to higher education. Just as the women on the margins engaged in impression management on group pages, they did so on information and wall pages.

Information Pages

Information pages functioned like virtual resumés where the women could share their educational status as high school graduates and, where applicable, as college students. These institutional affiliations were important to women on the margins of higher education and they shared them on their information pages. For example, Mirele listed both her high school and current community college:

> Mirele
>
> Studied at [community college] From Denver, Colorado Born on March 24
>
> Education and Work
>
> College [community college]
>
> Friends (130)
>
> High School
>
> Southside High School
>
> Class of 2009 (Mirele information page, May 24, 2011)

These affiliations were important to the women even if they no longer attended the school or were only hoping to enroll in the future. For example, Sophia did not change her affiliation with the public university she had attended, opting instead to list herself as a current student there, even after she left, and adding the community college where she hoped to transfer. While she was not enrolled in either institution, she still presented herself as involved in higher education on her profile.

Sophia

Studies at [public university] Lives in Denver, Colorado From San Francisco, California

Education and Work

College

[public university] Class of 2013

[community college], CO

Class of 2013

(Sophia information page, February 18, 2011)

The importance of higher education affiliations to the women was enacted in a different way by Tatum. While she was proud to have graduated from Aspire High School and listed it in her education and work section, she did not add the community college she was attending at the time.

Tatum

Went to Aspire High School Lives in Aurora, Colorado In a relationship Knows Spanish, Spanglish, English From Mexico

Born on February 1

Friends (200)

Education and Work

High School Aspire High School '09

(Tatum information page, October 20, 2010)

Tatum's omission of her community college status is likely related to the fact that she had hoped to attend a four-year university and viewed her community college studies as an unfortunate but necessary step in that direction. Rather than identifying herself with the community college, she left the college section blank, instead listing her knowledge of "Spanish, Spanglish English" and her connection to Mexico.

Where their friends and high school classmates in four-year institutions could prominently display college-going networks and accomplishments, the women on the margins did their best to join in these practices. Yet, they had few life experiences and limited access to these networks so they overstated some affiliations and filtered out others to present themselves in the best light possible.

Wall Posts

Wall pages also reinforced differences among the groups of women and transported emerging divides in their educational trajectories into digital space. Those who were in school could use their pages to index their enrollment in school and progress towards degrees. For

women who were on the margins of higher education, either not in school or under-enrolled in college, such posts were not an option. Women who were in community colleges sometimes shared school-based accomplishments or experiences including taking a test, earning good grades, but none of the women on the margins could share accomplishments like receiving scholarships or finding an internship.

Comparing Facebook profiles between the women who were in four-year institutions, those who were enrolled but not to the extent they had imagined or hoped for, and those who were not enrolled provided me with insight into the ways the Facebook platform facilitated the re-inscription of social standing. This took place in the micro-processes of status updates about accomplishments and setbacks and in the meta-narration of social ties, financial resources, institutional affiliations and experiences. Mirele and Sophia's wall pages show the types of information the women on the margins of higher education were sharing.

Mirele posted information that was typical among the women who were enrolled part-time and in community colleges. In these examples from her wall in the spring 2011, Mirele's newsfeed shows that she was playing games where she had to "unlock questions" that her friends had answered about her, exchanging happy birthday messages with friends, and uploading photos of her friends.

Mirele unlocked a question about them answered by HF

You can answer questions about Mirele to find out what friends said about you

May 20, 2011 at 6:31pm via Truths About You · · · Answer Mirele 's questions

HF

FELIZ AÑO [Happy Birthday]

January 3 at 5:36pm ·

Mirele added 6 new photos to the album lol ^-^. lol ^-^

January 9 at 1:18pm

Occasionally, Mirele might post some information about school. In the post below, a friend called out her name in all capital letters "MIRELE" and added a kiss "XD." When Mirele replied, "Mon-Thur," it's likely that she was telling her friend she was free on Mondays through Thursday because she "wasn't taking Chinese anymore." The conversation ended there, and they might have continued their conversation in a more private message board or by text message.

HF

MIRELE !!!! XD

January 19 at 11:32pm ·

Mirele Mon-Thur lol I'm not taking Chinese anymore >.<

February 13 at 2:10pm ·

HF D: porque ya no??? [why not]

February 13 at 5:17pm ·

Mirele was not inclined to disclose much information on her wall page, and she often deleted posts from her page, which I would have missed if I wasn't archiving wall pages every two

weeks. Yet, her posts revealed little about what was going on in her life, giving only a sketchy picture of her conversations with friends and activities related to school.

Sophia played games and shared photographs. She also chatted with her friends on her wall about everyday activities, including cooking, watching television, and coordinating schedules with her sister. For example, Sophia was admittedly not good at cooking, so she would sometimes post questions about how to cook something, or her successes and failures at preparing food. These types of exchanges were casual and humorous. Sophia also commented on television shows she was watching and coordinated with her sister about their work schedules.

> Sophia
>
> ok so...just to be clear..... and so that my eggs dont blow up again, how long exactly are you supposed to boil them for? this is a serious question.
>
> April 28 at 11:43pm · ·

> > HF Eighteen minutes is common, I think.
> >
> > April 28 at 11:51pm ·

> > Sophia ok thank you so much. Now.... i.....probably should have checked what time it was when i put them in....lol
> >
> > April 28 at 11:52pm ·

The women who were not in school did appreciate the site for helping maintain connections to friends. Since they were still in close proximity to many of their friends and family members in

their home community, these exchanges were often about coordinating, checking in and opinions about movies and television shows they were watching.

The women who were fully enrolled in colleges and universities might also make casual posts like this, but what is conspicuous by comparison is the limited amount of information about school that women on the margins posted on their wall pages. The women who were fully enrolled would more typically coordinate activities, share popular culture references, or make jokes with their college peers; exchanges that displayed and reinforced their college-going networks.

In the context of their educational pathways, these young women used Facebook to reinforce their existing social networks but not to gather information about schools or jobs. They communicated with their high school friends who had left home to attend four-year colleges and universities, but they did not ask questions or get information about applying to schools, scholarships or financial aid on the site. At the same time, they were cognizant that their peers were talking about college on their Facebook walls. This realization percolated onto Sophia's wall page one day when she reflected on her experience of seeing how people frequently complained about homework on their Facebook pages.

> Sophia : Everyone on FB [Facebook] complains about HW [homework] but I would do anything to go to school right now. I want to never work, and go to school and ditch when I want for the rest of my life. October 7, 2010 at 8:25pm
>
> > High School Friend: I completely agree with this statement it's like you stole it from my mouth
> >
> > S: right? im glad im not the only one :)

HF: i thought i was alone. i miss school. feels like everyone and her brother is going right now. [ex]cept me. -sad face-

S: ooh. ya. me too. but i'll probably complain once im in school as well so..i'll be one of em.

HF: you're not the only one. i dropped out after one semester lol [laugh out loud] but I'll get back in, and you will go too!

In the exchange above, Sophia commiserated with a friend about not being in school. She and her friend provided emotional support to each other as people who "will get back in, too," yet they witnessed, through Facebook, peers who went to school and had the luxury of complaining about homework. Seeing their former high school classmates complain about school reinforced for them that they were not in school. They did not have experiences, or even the frustrations of college to share. They could see their peers "getting ahead," and seeing this made it less desirable or acceptable for them to share their own challenges with accessing higher education.

Like the women who were enrolled in four-year institutions, the women on the margins of higher education used Facebook for communication with their known social ties. For women who were not enrolled and women who were at community colleges, their social networks were not expanding or reaching into college and professional connections to the same extent as their peers in four-year institutions. They communicated with new acquaintances much less often than the women at four-year institutions (N=167 compared to N=743) and as a smaller percentage of their overall communication on Facebook (13% compared to 33%). This comparison is shown in Table 8.

Their new ties were more likely to be friends of high school friends or work colleagues. It seemed that the women who were fully enrolled in colleges and universities were establishing more new contacts on campus (bridging or bonding social capital) and becoming more used to communicating through these networks—a process that left the women on the margins out of the accumulation of college and professionally-oriented social capital on Facebook.

Table 8

Wall post communication by enrollment status and type of social tie

Enrollment Status	Maintained	College	Total
On the Margins	1,152 (87%)	167 (13%)	1,319 (100%)
Fully Enrolled	1,481 (67%)	743 (33%)	2,224 (100%)

Where the women who were geographically distant from their home communities and experiencing minoritization on college campuses used the site to display both their upward social mobility and to access sources of encouragement to "stay strong" in their college pathways, Facebook did little to support the women on the margins of higher education in accessing college and professionally-oriented social capital. Rather, it functioned more to remind the women of their marginalized status as it reduced their life experiences into a college-oriented formula of social networks and cultural capital.

CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation by asking how Millennials' forays into college life are defined and documented with digital media. Situating this study in the field of youth culture and digital media studies, I considered ways that digital media mediated the social networks, cultural capital and educational pathways of a small group of academically talented women of color. I was interested in the young women's diverging educational pathways and how they were using Facebook in their post-high school years. The guiding questions for my inquiry were:

> How do high achieving women of color, who are also lower-income, understand, navigate and respond to culturally figured worlds of school, family and romance as they move from being successful high school students into the next phase of their lives?
>
> How does Facebook mediate their participation in cultural worlds and social positioning?

To answer these questions, I analyzed Facebook archives of the women's group pages, wall posts and information pages within the context of a longitudinal ethnography, FREE Pathways, about the women's educational trajectories. Several key findings emerged in my analysis. First, the women's access to financial resources was a significant influence in their college enrollment. Second, these inequities were reflected on Facebook as the platform privileged college and professionally-oriented networks and activities. Third, incorporating Facebook into a larger ethnography was important for my ability to understand the work Facebook did as a cultural artifact.

Financial Resources and Educational Pathways

An important finding from my analysis of Facebook archives and ethnographic data was that financial resources were a determining factor in the women's college enrollment. The women in this study were good students in high school who wanted to earn college degrees. However, within two years of high school graduation approximately one quarter of the women were enrolled in private colleges and universities, another quarter in public universities, and half were marginally enrolled in community colleges or not enrolled at all. Only those with substantial financial aid and scholarships from private foundations were able to enroll in four-year colleges and universities. Those who struggled to access adequate financial aid and scholarships experienced diminished enrollment in college.

The women's ability to realize their educational goals was jeopardized because of changes in the educational landscape that increased students' tuition burdens while public support for education declined. Their vulnerability to financial constraints was symptomatic of widening inequities in Colorado's educational landscape. For example:

> When the women graduated from high school, Colorado had fallen well below the national average for per-pupil funding and 48th in the nation for funding higher education (Colorado Commission on Higher Education, 2011).

> There had been dramatic increases in childhood poverty as they were growing up. In 2010, 40% of school-age children qualified for free or reduced lunch, an increase from 27% in 2000 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center).

> Colorado had adopted legislation that limited college access for Colorado high school graduates who lacked legal documentation by requiring them to pay out-of-state tuition (Colorado HB 1023, 2006).
>
> There were rapid and unintentional increases in student loan debts in Colorado as state funding for higher education decreased. In 2000, the state carried two-thirds of the cost of higher education. By 2011, tuition increases reversed this burden and students were carrying the larger two-thirds burden for the cost of their education (Colorado Commission on Higher Education, 2011).

The women had graduated from high school at a time when public support for education had dramatically decreased. This made it difficult for many of the young women to access higher education because they took on a greater financial burden when accepting student loans. The higher cost of tuition also increased their reliance on a limited amount of scholarships.

Despite their success as high school students and aspirations for college degrees, higher education was not accessible to all of them. Instead, some of the women were awarded major foundational scholarships that helped them circumvent the decline in public funding. Others were able to piece together financial resources to maintain their enrollment in public institutions. Sadly, about half of the women did not have adequate financial resources, and were having to rethink their college aspirations in the years after high school graduation. Their stories illustrate the poignant ways that shifts in education funding can affect the life opportunities of young people.

Facebooking Difference

Another important finding was the ways Facebook reflected differences in the young women's educational pathways and their access to social, cultural and economic capital. While

all of the young women in this study shared similar levels of access and knowledge about digital media technology, Facebook privileged differences in their social and cultural capital after high school. Craig Watkins (2011) suggests that the distribution of risks and opportunities young people experience as they engage with digital media constitute important "digital divides." As they updated their Facebook status, the site helped some demonstrate progress along college pathways while it left others unable to do so. Facebook reinforced emerging differences in the women's social positioning and status by benefiting women who were at four-year institutions more than women who were not.

For the women who were enrolled in four-year colleges and universities, the site supported their persistence in college by reinforcing their connections to college life and their home communities. Their Facebook profiles displayed their membership in college networks and participation in college-oriented activities. An important function of Facebook for college students is that it supports bridging and bonding social ties—those that help students connect and feel connected to their colleges and universities (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007).

The women who were enrolled at four-year institutions also explained that Facebook helped them feel connected to home as they viewed friends and family members' profile pages. When they looked at images and read status updates from people at home, they felt that they knew everything was "ok" and they could focus on their studies. By making "home" more accessible to them, the social media site shifted the distribution of information in their lives and allowed the women to access information and support from home more easily.

Facebook provided far fewer benefits to the women who were on the margins of higher education and their participation on the site exposed them to emotional risks. These women had expected that they would be able to go to college, yet they found themselves struggling to enroll

shortly after their graduation from high school. Facebook was not a resource for helping them overcome the challenges they faced. It did not provide them access to college and professional networks or information about college scholarships, college admissions, and internships.

As a result, the women who were not enrolled in college benefitted less from their participation in the social media site than their peers in college. They were not able to leverage the social and cultural capital that the site privileged, and they had to watch as their peers developed college and professionally-oriented profiles. Facebook did more to promote their sense of exclusion from higher education, which they expressed as frustration with Facebook. The content of their posts and limited access to new social ties on Facebook indicated that it can be difficult for young people who are not enrolled in colleges and universities to access new sources of social and cultural capital (Flanagan and Levine, 2010).

However, the women on the margins of higher education were still very determined to earn college degrees at some point. They described their efforts to save money, stay informed about DREAM Act legislation that might amend their residency status, meet with financial aid officers, and use the internet to search for scholarships. They also were learning about alternative pathways through which they might access education and on-the-job training in fields of interest. For example, Aerith was considering entering the military or applying for jobs with the Department of Corrections where she could have her college tuition paid through her employer. The women were making efforts to find new directions in their lives and considered both higher education and alternative routes for accomplishing their professional goals. These efforts suggested that they might have been delayed in accomplishing their goals, but that they had not given up on their dreams. Unfortunately, in the "real-time" status update on Facebook, these efforts often went unnoticed and unsupported, and may have contributed to their sense of

isolation and being left behind as their peers accessed experiences and networks that supported their educational and professional aspirations.

Facebook at Work: Mediating Youth Cultural Practices

Incorporating Facebook as a source of information and as a channel for communication with the women helped stabilize information about the women's diverging educational pathways. It was especially helpful in providing insight into the women's responses to their educational status, including how they negotiated challenges and translated educational enrollment into feelings of self-worth. Women who were fully enrolled in college expressed confidence and pride in their accomplishments, while women on the margins voiced frustration and self-doubt. While traditional "offline" ethnography would have provided some of this insight, the digital record on Facebook recorded the women's negotiation of educational pathways in detail as they authored group posts, updated their wall post statuses and information page profiles on a weekly basis, and in conversation with friends and family.

Conducting research with the social media site led to an important set of findings about Facebook's particular functions as a cultural artifact. Initially, I conceptualized Facebook as a "space of authoring" (Holland et.al, 1998) where the women engaged in literacy practices and authored identities as good students. However, this approach inhibited me from addressing the important differences in enrollment status because on the surface they engaged in many of the same practice with Facebook (sharing hyperlinks, referencing popular culture, playing games).When I shifted my analysis to consider Facebook as a cultural artifact that mediated the flow of information in the women's lives, my main findings crystallized: Facebook privileged certain types of social and cultural capital and benefitted college-going women more than women on the margins.

Conceptualizing Facebook as a cultural artifact refocused my analysis on the *work* the social media site was doing in the women's lives. For women who were experiencing some upward social mobility via college attendance, they could maintain a growing number of collegiate connections, internship titles and job affiliations, prominently displayed on Facebook. For those whose progress in college was delayed or interrupted, their disappointments and failures became increasingly obvious on Facebook: they could not even complain about homework as they watched their peers talk about college online. They were left only hoping that their time would come. As the young women's lives and educational pathways diverged after high school, Facebook reinforced these differences by stabilizing information about their educational pathways.

An unintended outcome of their participation on the site was the reproduction of their social status with respect to higher education. This reproduction of differences has important implications for scholarship about "digital divides" that emerge through young people's engagement with digital media. In this case, Facebook participation coupled with inequities in Colorado's educational landscape reinforced the women's social statuses. The site helped reposition women who were enrolled in colleges as upwardly mobile students while it reinforced the lack of mobility and isolation women on the margins were experiencing.

Going forward, other scholars may wish to consider the work digital media do in the lives of young people. Redistributing the flow of information, stabilizing social positioning, privileging certain types of social and cultural capital, and providing some young people with greater benefits or exposure to risks are important manifestations of digital divides. Understanding how digital media contribute to these cultural practices will require the incorporation of digital media into ethnographic projects. Indexing digital media in the context of

young people's lives will help researchers overcome "online-offline" binaries and lead to more complete understanding of the ways that various types of media mediate youth cultural practices.

Future Directions

This dissertation brings Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998) rich theoretical framework about identities, cultural worlds, social positioning and cultural artifacts into conversation with youth cultural studies. I focused on Facebook's functioning as a cultural artifact that redistributed and stabilized information in the young women's social networks. The differences between college and non-college going women's use of Facebook show that digital media can mediate young people's access to certain kinds of information and networks. Future research that considers how digital media mediate youth engagement in culturally figured worlds might reveal important manifestations of digital divides that are emerging because of the "work" artifacts do in the lives of young people.

The results presented in this study focus on the women's Facebook usage two years after high school, when they were still adjusting to being in college, or recalibrating their aspirations based on their encounters with higher education. Following the women into adulthood will reveal more information about variations in their individual pathways, and how their networks and social media use might shift going forward. Questions still remain as to whether they will accomplish their goals and how their understanding of schooling as a means for social mobility might change. As they enter professional careers, what types of media, and social media, might they leverage in different phases of their lives? What areas of their lives might these new forms of media support? And, how will Millennials' use of digital media reflect and shape their adult lives?

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Protocol

I. Tracing Dreams: Being good Students, figured worlds of family, school, romance

Illustration and words:
What is the earliest Dream you can remember your family had for you?
Trace this dream (draw a map, incorporate images, poetry, etc)

Life mapping:
Draw a "map" or illustration of path from beginning of high school and into the future
What part of your dreams include education?
What involve romance, relationships?
How do you overcome challenges to your dreams?
What helps you navigate college?

II. Cultural Wealth

Playback Theatre: working together to explain and re-enact an educational experience.
What stands out about a college experience?
What worked or didn't?
What have you done, or help have you gotten to make it possible?
What relationships have been most important in helping you on your path?
What have you learned from your family that helps you? How do they support you?

III. Being a Millennial

Social Media:
Open your Facebook Wall and load it back a few weeks or months. When you look at the posts, what do you notice?
How do social media, texting, and digital technology in general fit in your lives?
How do they help, hinder and change things for you?
How do you imagine they have changed college from when I was a student?

Controversy about FB privacy policies
Digital short about the amount of personal data FB holds on its servers, "stalkerbook" and people seeing info about you.
Do you think about the privacy policies?
What anxieties, concerns, frustrations do you experience about FB?
How do you go about posting (or not) on FB?

IV. Sexuality, Sisterhood and the Myth of Romance

Explore Facebook"friend list": Create a list who they communicate with and about what?
Closest girlfriends
Draw yourself and who you surround yourself with
What do you cry about?
What do you laugh about?
What do you joke about?

Facebook Wall and Information Page analysis: selecting a couple passages related to romance or sexuality and illustrating or describing what they meant at the time, what they think of them now, and how they think their FB friends might interpret them.

What about sexual joking with friends?

Playback theatre of romance: [15 min index cards with "romance" words on them: act them out improve style] sharing a personal or general idea about romance, acting them out to each other.

APPENDIX B
Supplemental Interview Protocol

Digital Media

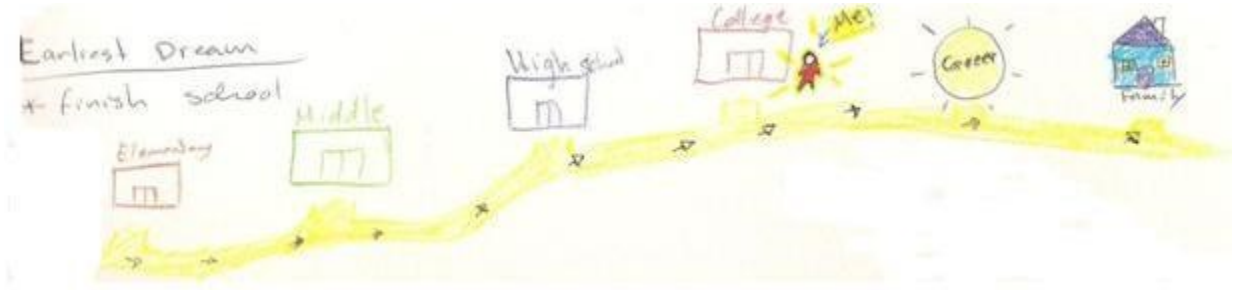
1. What kinds of digital media do you use in your life? (do you know what I mean by digital media?)
2. How do you use social media, the internet, cell phones?
    a. To stay in touch with people?
    b. To express yourself, for creativity?
    c. To access information related to school and careers?
    d. How do Facebook and text messages compare?
3. What concerns or anxieties do you have? What problems do you see with how people use it?
4. In the focus groups we talked about how people post song lyrics: Do you post song lyrics? Do you see other people using them in status feeds? What purpose do they serve?
5. I've noticed that some people joke a lot with their girl friends, about being "hot," marrying friends, or commenting about being in love. What do you think this is all about?
6. Do you notice ways that people your age use digital media differently than older people?

Education and Support

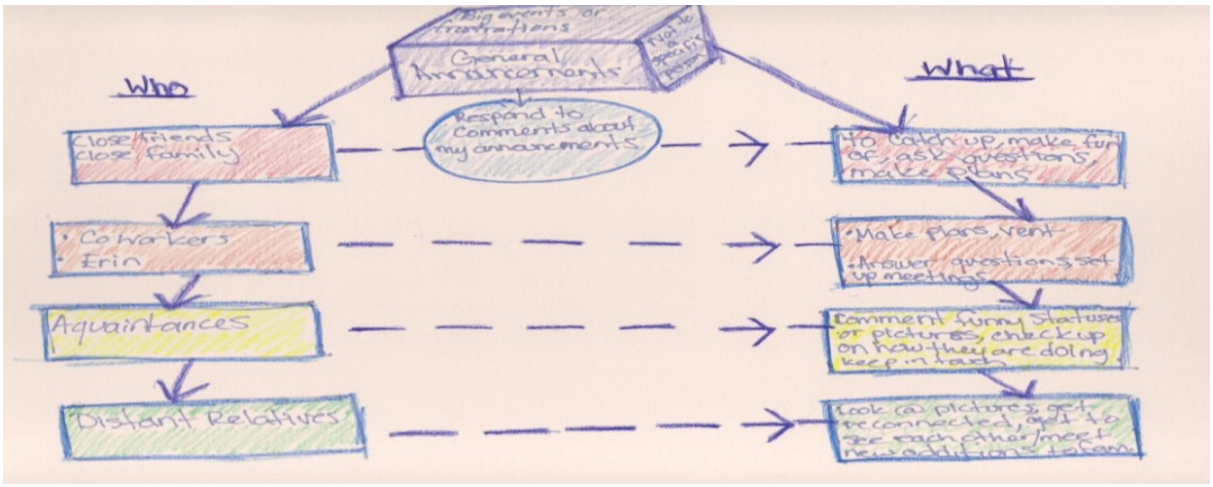
7. Where do you hope see yourself in 10 years?
    a. What kinds of support do you need to accomplish your goals?
    b. What do you see as the main challenges for achieving your goals?
8. Who have been important sources of support in your life?
    c. Where does family fit into your plans for the future?
        i. How does your relationship with your family compare to in high school?
        ii. What are important qualities in a romantic partner?
9. It seems like college is really important to everyone in FREE- do you think there are other options for achieving your dream? Or why is college such an important part of your futures?
10. What have been some important moments in your education, for example, what stands out important lessons or events?
11. What qualities do you have that will help you achieve your dreams or goals?

APPENDIX C
Sample Artifacts

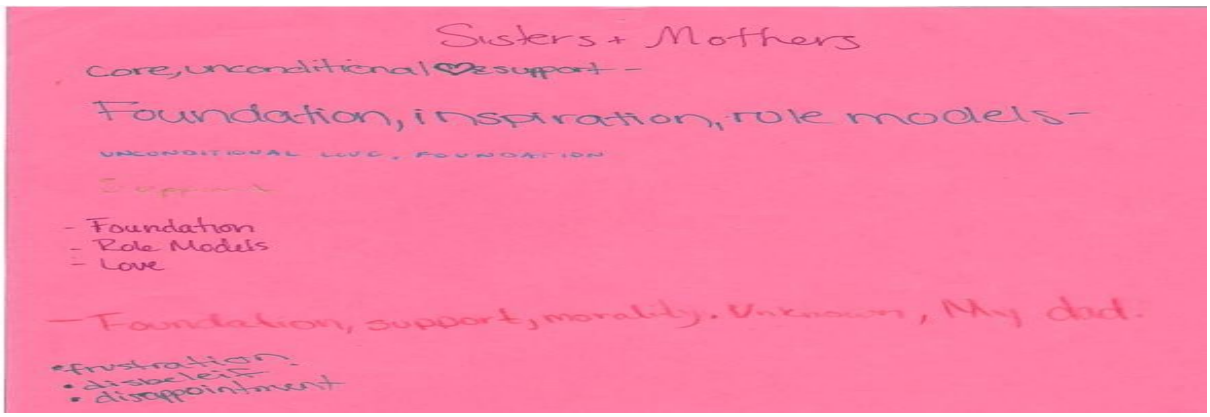
Mapping Dreams:



Facebook social network diagram:



List of ideas related to “Mothers and Sisters” used in Playback Theater:



APPENDIX D
Year 5 Group Post Protocol

Facebook Protocol Questions – Winter-Spring, 2011

4 Weeks (Jan-Feb)
Q12 Week 1 (Jan. 18) [1/29]
(First and second year students): How did fall semester/quarter grades work out? Any surprises? As you reflect on the rest of this school year, what goals have you set for yourself?
(Non-students): How did your fall go? Any new developments? As you reflect on the next few months, what goals have you set for yourself?

Q13 Week 2 [2/2]
(First and second year students): For the rest of this school year, what goals do you have for your personal or social life? Why are these goals important to you?
(Non-students): How is your personal or social life going? Are you satisfied with this aspect of your life?

Q14 Week 3 [2/9]
(First and second year students): What courses are you taking this semester/quarter? So far, which ones do you like/dislike? Why?
(Non-students): How is your job going? Are there aspects of your job that you like and dislike?

Q15 Week 4: [2/16]
(First and second year students): Do you have your own computer? If not, do you have ready access to computer labs? How do you learn new skills on the computer?
(Non-students): Do you have access to a computer? Do you own one, use someone else's, or use a public computer? How often do you use a computer? For what purposes?

4 Weeks (Feb-March)
Q16 Week 1 [2/23]
(First and second year students): As the semester/quarter progresses, who do you talk to when you have questions about your college, classes, and/or your major?
(Non-students): When you have questions or problems related to your job, who do you talk to?

Q17 Week 2 [3/2]
(First and second year students): Who do you go to get new information about your major field? Which relationships make you feel most connected to your major field?
(Non-students): Who do you go to get information about topics in which you're interested?

Q18 Week 3 [3/9]
(First and second year students): How do you feel about your college or university climate? How is the climate for women and students of color?
(Non-students): How is the climate for women and people of color where you work?

Q19 Week 4 [3/16]
(First and second year students, and non-students): How are things going with family? with friends? How do you usually communicate with them?

4 Weeks (April)
Q20 Week 1 [4/6]
(First and second year students, and non-students): Who are you role models now? Describe them and indicate why they are important to you.

Q21 Week 2 [4/14]
(First and second year students, and non-students): What are your thoughts these days about engineering and the FREE project? What are your thoughts about participating in the Pathways (continuation of FREE) project? How has it impacted or influenced your academic decisions or life as a student?

Q22 Week 3 [4/20]
(First and second year students): How well do you think you've managed your time this year in college? What would you do differently?
(Non-students): How well do you think you managed your time this year? What would you do differently?

Q23 Week 4 [4/25]
(First and second year students): What extracurricular activities have you been involved in this year? Have you led or initiated any of them? Have you had new projects or new responsibilities in the groups in which you participate?
(Non-students): Are you involved in any organizations or community groups? If so, what is the nature of your involvement? Have you had new projects or new responsibilities in the groups in which you participate?

2 Weeks (May)
Q24 Week 1 [4/27]
(First and second year students): Who were the people that were most influential for you during this past year?
(Non-students): Who were the people most influential for you this year?

Q25 Week 2 [5/5]
(First and second year students): What are your plans for the summer? Do you have any new plans for the next academic year?
(Non-students): What are your plans for the near future?

Q26 Week 3 [5/5]
What kind of information do you get from reading the newsfeed on Facebook. How have you used this information?

APPENDIX E
Year 5 Interview Protocol

Pathways Interview Protocol

Fall 2010

1. In general, how would you describe your experiences in classes so far this year? (INTERVIEW Fall 2009)
    a. Class content or activities?
    b. Interactions with faculty and/or teaching assistants?
    c. Interactions with other students?
    d. What is the approximate ratio of men to women in your classes? How does that work out [classroom interactions, study groups, etc]?

2. In general, how would you describe your experiences of college life (outside of classes) so far this year? (INTERVIEW Fall 2009)
    a. Social activities?
    b. Relationships with others?
    c. Sense of belonging or fitting in?

3. How would you sum up your thinking about your major so far? (INTERVIEW Fall 2009)
    a. How satisfied are you with your (probable) choice?
    b. What concerns do you have about your choice?

4. Financial resources play an important part in attending college,
    a. how are you or your family financing your college education?
        i. Loans?
        ii. Personal resources from jobs?
    1. Do you work part time/ full time while taking classes? How many hours a week do you work, on the average? Do you feel that your job responsibilities have affected with your schoolwork?
        iii. Financial gifts from family or extended family or awards (non-scholarship)
    b. Did you apply for scholarships? If so, which ones? What scholarships are you receiving? Are they renewable? If so, do you have to maintain a minimum gpa? How do you feel about retaining the scholarship(s)?
    c. Do you expect the financing of your education to change in the future? If so, how?

5. How would you describe the differences between your first year in college and your second year in college?

6. Are you satisfied where you are at this point in your life? Explain.

APPENDIX F
FREE Pathways Year 5 Coding Taxonomy

1) STEM
   a) Attitudes toward STEM: Girls explicitly or implicitly discussing feelings about, perspectives on, or views of STEM.
   b) Exploring new opportunities in STEM: Girls taking initiative to try out previously-unexplored opportunities in STEM (i.e., taking a new class, joining a club, starting an internship, exploring a new major).
   c) Thoughts about engineering: Discussing feelings, current involvement (or lack thereof) in engineering, and potential future plans for careers in engineering.
   d) Thoughts about FREE: Talking about how the FREE project has or has not impacted their current academic and social lives or reflecting on FREE's importance during high school.
   e) Construct engineering as gendered
   f) Engineering language
   g) Knowledge of engineering
   h) Knowledge of information technology
   i) Presentation of engineering
   j) Role models: Girls explicitly or implicitly positioning someone as a role model or claiming not to have any role models.

2) Self Concept
   a) Confidence in academic abilities: Expressing self-confidence or lack of confidence in ability to succeed in difficult courses, earn good grades, excel in a tough major (such as engineering).
   b) Freedom/independence : Girls describing (or discounting) college or work as a place that offers greater freedom and independence than high school (i.e., living away from parents) and/or discussing the consequences of independence.
   c) Participating in success: Evidence of girls actively taking steps to ensure self-defined success in academic, personal, and social lives.

3) Post-secondary
   a) College climate/fit with girls' expectations and needs: Describing college as a good or bad fit; stating whether or not their college experience is what they expected.
   b) Comfort interacting with professors, advisors: Discussing whether or not they feel comfortable approaching faculty and advisors for help, advice, etc.
   c) Coursework: Discussing issues related to courses, including exams, assignments, classroom environments, course planning, and general difficulty or ease of classes.
   d) Majors: Talking about current and potential majors (difficulty, satisfaction level, reasons for choosing, etc.)

e) Comparing college and high school: Discussing similarities and differences between high school and college (i.e., ease of coursework, social opportunities, freedom).
f) Use of college resources: Describing reliance (or lack of reliance) on advisors, financial aid personnel, support groups, tutoring services, etc.

4) SES
   a) Financial resources—personal/familial: Discussing personal and familial financial resources (or lack thereof).
   b) Financial resources—grants, need-based: Discussing need-based sources of income, such as Pell grants, Stafford loans, and work study
   c) Financial resources—scholarships: Discussing scholarships and other competitive, merit- or/and need- based financial awards.
   d) Jobs: Discussing current jobs, specifying whether or not they provide a necessary source of income.
   e) Jobs related to financial need
   f) Not related to financial need

5) Represent issues of ethnicity, class, gender [old code]

6) Social Capital and Networks
   a) Classmate networks: General discussion about classmates and reliance on classmates for support, companionship, etc.
      i) Classmate networks - Academic or Career: Specific anecdotes or evidence of girls actively seeking advice from classmates in relation to their academic lives.
      ii) Classmate networks - Personal: Evidence of girls actively seeking advice from classmates in relation to their personal lives.
      iii) Classmate networks - General reliance: General implied reliance on classmate networks for support, companionship, etc.
   b) Friend networks: General discussion about friends and reliance on friends for support, companionship, etc.
      i) Friend networks - Academic or Career: Specific anecdotes or evidence of girls actively seeking advice from friends in relation to their academic lives.
      ii) Friend networks -Personal: Evidence of girls actively seeking advice from friends in relation to their personal lives.
      iii) Friend networks -General reliance: General implied reliance on friendship networks for support, companionship, etc.
   c) Family networks: General discussion about family and reliance on family for support, companionship, etc.
      i) Family networks - Academic or Career: Specific anecdotes or evidence of girls actively seeking advice from family in relation to their academic lives.

   ii) Family networks - Personal: Evidence of girls actively seeking advice from family in relation to their personal lives.
   iii) Family networks - General reliance: General implied reliance on family networks for support, companionship, etc.
d) Professional networks: Demonstrates existence of professional networks, such as relationships with faculty, advisors, internship supervisors, or potential employers or indicates a lack of these resources and reliance on professional networks for support, companionship, etc.
   i) Professional networks - Academic or Career: Specific anecdotes or evidence of girls actively seeking advice from professional networks in relation to their academic lives.
   ii) Professional networks - Personal: Evidence of girls actively seeking advice from professional networks in relation to their personal lives.
   iii) Professional networks - General reliance: General implied reliance on professional networks for support, companionship, etc.
e) Other Networks General discussion about other sources of support, companionship, etc. (could include religious communities)
   i) Other Networks - Academic or Career: Specific anecdotes or evidence of girls actively seeking advice from other networks in relation to their academic lives.
   ii) Other Networks - Personal: Evidence of girls actively seeking advice from other networks in relation to their personal lives.
   iii) Other Networks - General reliance: General implied reliance on other networks for support, companionship, etc.

7) Cultural Capital
   a) Aspirational capital: refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resiliency is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals
   b) Linguistic capital: includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style
   c) Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin)that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition resistant capital, including communal bonds, funds of knowledge and pedagogies of the home
   d) Social capital: can be understood as networks of people and ethnic community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions
   e) Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind

8) Goals and Future Plans
   a) Future planning—academic/career: General discussion of hopes and plans for the future; related specifically to academic and career issues.
   b) Future planning—personal: General discussion of hopes and plans for the future; any issues not related to school or careers.
   c) Goal-setting—academic/career: More specific than future planning; involves girls stating explicit steps needed to achieve academic and career goals.
   d) Goal-setting—personal: More specific than future planning; involves girls stating explicit steps needed to achieve personal goals.

9) Time
   a) Time management: Discussing issues related to managing time (i.e., balancing work, school, and social life; having to learn time management skills while living apart from parents)
   b) Extracurricular activities: Describes current or future involvement in, or desire to be involved in, clubs and activities outside standard college requirements.
   c) Time issues

10) Youth Culture
   a) Romance and Sexuality: Constructions of beauty, talk about romance, gendered roles, dating, sex, sexuality and incorporation of theses as references into conversations about other topics.
   b) Technology References: Mentions of troubles and excitement in their use of technology, for example, broken phones, new computers, opinions about Facebook and MySpace, participation in online gaming, and indications of what type of communication they use for what purpose (e.g. “text me…”, “send me a message,” etc.)
   c) Popular Culture References: Incorporation of hyperlinks, videos, song lyrics, TV characters and shows into wall posts and conversations.
   d) Political and Historical References: Political opinions, positioning in relation to political parties and discussion of historical events (e.g. history of US-Mexico relations, member of Republican Party, etc.)

APPENDIX G
Secondary Coding Taxonomy

1. Facebook
    a. General description of use of space
        i. evidence of maintenance
        ii. bonding strengthening ties to institutions
        iii. bridging- new friends
    b. purpose of use
        i. benefits (get valuable information)
        ii. norms (what you do or don't do on FB)
    c. Lexicon examples
        i. Formal English
        ii. Spanglish
        iii. SmS/emoticons
        iv. Reference/convergence literacy
    d. Anxieties/concerns/ problems with use
        i. too personal," disclosure
        ii. Other transgressions
        iii. Safety, geotracking
        iv. Digital archive, context
        v. Time drain
        vi. display of social capital
    e. Strategies to Managing Vulnerability
        i. song lyrics
        ii. monitoring [limiting] participation
        iii. shifts in participation
2. Tracing Dreams
    a. Defining education goals/purpose
        i. Dreams
        ii. Careers
        iii. Social capital and networks
        iv. Personal enrichment
    b. Family
        i. Support for education
        ii. Mothers and desire for education
        iii. Social mobility tied to supporting family
    c. Student identity
        i. Capable (confidence in academic abilities)
        ii. Selection of major [interest, career, etc]

iii. Comparison to men [female]
iv. Comparison to wealthier students, [poor]
v. Comparison to white students [racialized]

3. Institutional Encounters
    a. Characterization of college atmosphere
        i. Financial aid offices
        ii. Advising
        iii. Scholarship programs
        iv. Diversity Programs
        v. Via Technology
    b. Barriers
        i. Legal status
        ii. Finances
        iii. Time
        iv. Work
        v. Race and Racism
    c. Support networks
        i. Mentorship
        ii. Financial aid
        iii. Internships and exposure to careers
        iv. Non traditional sororities
    d. Rethinking the pipeline
        i. Exiting college
        ii. Re-entering college
        iii. Under-enrollment
        iv. Thriving
        v. Out of school
4. Romance
    a. Definitions provided
    b. Display of relationships
        i. Characterizations of men
        ii. Bonds with women
    c. Heteronormative: dating to marriage
    d. Treatment of homosexuality (advocacy, etc)
    e. Romance strategies vis a vis school
        i. Marriage and family
        ii. Postponement/ distancing
    f. Romantic play with girlfriends
        i. explanations given
    ii. Queering terms with friends