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Sophie Katzman

Trinity College, sophie.katzman@trincoll.edu

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Success by Class: How Socioeconomic Status Affects Students'
Definitions of Success at Private Liberal Arts Colleges

Sophie Katzman
Trinity College
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Advised by Rachael Barlow
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INTRODUCTION

Students choose to go to highly selective colleges to succeed. Yet, success is a subjective term; success is hard to define because everyone has his or her own vision of what it means to be successful. For certain people it is having an impressive grade point average, for some it means participating in clubs in order to network for the future, and for others success is about having a busy social life. However, there is something that influences students' various definitions of success: social class. Class plays a large role in a student's navigation of a higher education institution. Students go to college with the idea that they will have the same opportunities as all other students at that school, but in reality, class background provides advantages to some and disadvantages to others.

This thesis will focus on the role class plays in a student's definition of success at highly selective liberal arts colleges. It will explore how class standing stratifies students' attitudes toward success, using data from The New England Consortium on Assessment and Student Learning (NECASL) project.

The New England Consortium on Assessment and Student Learning

The research for this project was carried out using panel data from NECASL. NECASL consists of qualitative interviews from students at seven selective liberal arts colleges in New England. The purpose of the NECASL project was to investigate how students learn at small liberal arts colleges and how they navigate the academics and extracurricular experiences at these schools.

The seven schools have similar characteristics. They each have between 1,700 and 2,600 students. While five of the schools are coeducational, two are women's colleges. They are all scattered through New England in both urban and suburban locations. Each of these schools is highly selective and highly expensive, all falling within the top 40 National Liberal Arts Colleges on

U.S. News and World Report and within the tuition range of \$43,000 to \$47,000 ¹(U.S. News and Report).

I focus on one particular question asked of the students who participated in the NECASL project: “What would success look like for you at the end of this semester (or this year)?” This question was asked each year, allowing me to study how students changed over time. I predict that upper class students² think about success differently than lower socioeconomic status (SES)³ students, since they have grown up with different expectations of what it means to be “accomplished.” Students that come from lower SES backgrounds have more pressure coming from both themselves and their parents to succeed and advance from their social class background than students from upper class backgrounds do (Aries and Berman 2013). While upper class parents still exude pressure on their children, they are more likely to support them in whatever they choose to do and encourage them to do something that brings them happiness (Aries 2013). Therefore, there are distinct class specific pressures that affect the way students view and define success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many sociologists have studied the way students navigate higher education institutions. These studies focus on how factors such as race, class, social status, and cultural capital affect students’ experiences in college. My project focuses on the relationship between social class and the definition of success at these small elite colleges. Given that class background influences the way a student views success, the theory that grounds this research is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. Since Bourdieu studies how

¹ Not including room and board

² Students not on financial aid and not first generation status.

³ Students either on financial aid, first generation status (neither parent attended college) or both.

education reproduces class inequalities, his work fits into the study of higher education institutions and class. Additionally, there are many sociologists who have built on Bourdieu's ideas in relation to higher education institutions, so I have also examined these in my research.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital has several characterizations according to Bourdieu. Steven Seidman describes Bourdieu's capital as referring to, "resources or qualities possessed by an individual that have social influence or currency" (Seidman 2013:147). As specified by Bourdieu, there are different forms of capital, such as economic, cultural, symbolic, and social capital (Seidman 2013). Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, "Culture reproduces class domination to the extent that the dominating classes can impose their cultural values, standards, and tastes on the whole society, or at least install their cultural preferences as the standard of what is the highest, best, and most legitimate in national culture" (Seidman 2013: 147). Therefore, since students of different social classes interact together, the college environment, including the upper class students and faculty, may influence the lower SES students' definitions of success.

Cultural capital affects the transition from high school to college. According to Mitchell Stevens, "For the affluent upper middle class, the transition to college is a seamless web of interdependencies...colleges rely on affluent families to produce and deliver most of their raw materials, while families in turn rely on colleges to certify those our society calls its most accomplished" (2007: 247). In saying that the transition for upper middle class students is "seamless" and based on "interdependencies," Stevens suggests that upper class students have already been exposed to places like the climate of elite institutions, so they have a more streamlined transition in contrast to their lower SES peers. Stuber also discusses the comfort

of the upper class students at higher education institutions. Upper class students are comfortable with the college environment, in particular, interacting with other students, since they are often from similar backgrounds. Whereas, in contrast, lower SES students have different life skills, such as doing laundry, taking care of family members and cooking (Stuber 2011). Yet, although these skills help them adjust to an independent lifestyle, they do not help them adapt to the upper class students at the college (Stuber 2011). Seamus Khan builds on Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital in terms of the way upper class students navigate elite boarding schools. He says, "They feel at home within these institutions" (2011: 66). This is because their cultural capital gives them certain behaviors that work to their advantage (Khan 2011).

Students from lower SES backgrounds have difficulty navigating higher education institutions because they have different barriers to face. First generation students⁴ have more trouble managing their time with assignments and prioritizing their time (Peter Collier and David Morgan 2007). Furthermore, these students often have to divide time between jobs and their schoolwork, so they cannot always put their academics first (Collier and Morgan 2007). According to Britton and Baxter, the "process of acquiring new forms of cultural capital through education...has significant effects on their sense of self, as well as on relations with friends and colleagues who still inhabit the 'old' world" (2001: 93). This balance of the "old world" with the new college environment can strain the individual; in formulating a new set of values, they sometimes must discard their family values (Britton and Baxter 2001). In addition, the distinction between lower SES students and upper class students causes lower SES students to have "feelings of inferiority and intimidation" (Aries & Seider 2005: 428). Therefore, attaining this balance can be a measure of success for lower

⁴ Neither parent attended college.

SES students, whereas it most likely does not exist in this way for upper class students (Britton and Baxter 2001).

Students from upper class backgrounds have different attitudes and opinions than their lower SES peers. The cultural capital of lower SES students as opposed to their upper class peers provides them with different personality attributes, which can affect their opinions of success. Lower SES students have strong values and appreciate what their parents have worked hard for them to have; furthermore, these students feel that they can understand and relate to many types of people, which is something that is less common in upper class students (Aries & Seider 2005). In addition, they have different post graduate plans. Students, who went into college thinking they would mimic the career paths of their lower SES parents, end up shifting their motivations and pursuing post-graduate degrees and higher end careers (Aries & Seider 2005). Yet, lower SES students may have more limitations than their upper class peers because the lower SES students are less likely to have parental assistance after graduation (Aries and Berman 2013).

Furthermore, often it is the cultural capital of the upper class that is preferred by the elite higher education institutions and the people associated with them. Elizabeth Aries and Richard Berman discuss the way upper class students' cultural capital is preferred at Amherst College. They argue:

Another way to think about the challenged lower SES students faced is to consider sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, social, and economic capital. Each social class transmits distinctive *cultural* capital. The cultural capital of the affluent has come to refer to many things—educational qualifications and credentials; linguistic competencies; knowledge of highbrow aesthetic culture (e.g., opera, ballet); cultural goods (e.g., books, dictionaries, paintings); styles of dress and speech; manners; tastes and preferences; levels of confidence, certainty, and entitlement; and skills, competencies, and abilities to gain success to scarce rewards. It is the cultural capital of the *affluent* that is valued at an institution like Amherst (2013: 35-6).

Amherst is a compatible school to the ones studied in NECASL. Thus, as Aries suggests, students from different class backgrounds have different cultural capital, yet it is the cultural capital of the upper class that is preferred by the people at the higher education institutions. Therefore, students face pressure to uphold a certain standard of cultural capital, even if it is not their own. According to Hansen and Mastekaasa, students who hold the most cultural capital are more likely to succeed in educational institutions than students with less cultural capital (2006). Hence, lower SES students feel pressure to meet these standards in order to reach overall success at small elite liberal arts colleges.

While students from different class backgrounds come into college with a different amount of cultural capital, these institutions can provide a place for cultural capital to converge. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is an aggregation of students' resources (Stuber 2011). Hence, students, usually upper class students, who start off college with a lot of cultural capital, build on that throughout their time in college. Working class students⁵ too may hold some of the dominant class cultural capital when they enter, according to Stuber, but they have less of it than the upper class students (Stuber 2011). Furthermore, working class students have more opportunity to get involved in activities and be upwardly mobile at certain higher education institutions, such as small elite colleges than they do at big universities (Stuber 2011). Mitchell Stevens' "transformation thesis" describes how lower SES students attend these institutions as a way to progress "on the basis of demonstrated individual accomplishment, not inherited privilege" (Stevens 2007: 12). This concept, based on the theories of Max Weber, allows individuals to gain class status without having been

⁵ Defined by Stuber as students whose "parents held occupational positions that required lower levels of skill—usually within the manual labor or services sectors of the economy, offered lower levels of pay, and typically provided them with limited autonomy at work" (2011:21).

born in upper class families (Stevens 2007). According to Britton and Baxter, in a college environment, lower SES students learn the cultural capital of their upper class peers, such as their language and their views of the world, and they begin to assimilate (2001). Thus, elite institutions are a place where class is shared and further where upward mobility can occur (Britton and Baxter 2001).

Higher education institutions can also perpetuate inequality rather than foster cultural capital convergence. Upper class students with the most cultural capital perform better academically than lower SES students with less capital at a Norwegian University (Hansen and Mastekaasa 2006). Furthermore, according to Mitchell Stevens, “Higher education has not been the great American equalizer” (2007: 14). Elite institutions still provide a place for many inequalities (Stevens 2007). Although there are many more college graduates in America in this generation than in past ones, there is still a strong association between socioeconomic status and educational attainment; upper class students are more likely to reach the highest levels of academic achievement (Stevens 2007). Thus, there are barriers that may not make it possible for lower SES students to have the same opportunities as their upper class peers.

Conclusions

Much of the sociological research looked at focuses on the different cultural capital of lower SES and upper class students. Furthermore, the research discusses the way in which cultural capital produces or reduces inequalities in higher education. However, these studies are narrow because they often focus on one or just a few schools. Furthermore, they don't always mention students' definitions of success; instead, they show how cultural capital in general affects success. Lastly, they are not longitudinal studies, so they don't show developments over time.

METHODOLOGY

NECASL project

The NECASL study involves a longitudinal study of 36 students from the Class of 2010 at each of these seven schools. The students who participated in the study were selected by a race stratified random sampling for all the schools and a gender and race stratified random sampling for the coeducational institutions. Each sampling yielded six Asian Americans, six African Americans, six Latino/as, six international and 12 domestic white first year students. The students in each cohort were interviewed up to three times in their first year. Then, they were interviewed up to twice a year until they graduated and then once in the year after they graduated. At six of the seven schools, fellow students interviewed the student participants. Having students as interviewers instead of faculty members or other adults allowed interviewees to give more genuine answers. In keeping within confidentiality guidelines, the student participants signed informed consent forms, so as not to have their names or identifying information associated with the interviews. However, once their name was removed, they agreed to have their identification number relate back to administrative records, which included information such as financial aid status and grade point average.

Each interview lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours. The interviews started with a follow up question from the previous interview and then continued with questions on different elements of the college experience, such as academics, athletics, study abroad, major choices, thesis and honors projects, diversity, summer plans, internships, jobs, post-graduate plans, friends, relationships with faculty, social life, and success. Depending on the year the student was in his or her college career, the questions varied. For instance, freshman year, the questions were focused on getting adjusted to the college environment; sophomore year they were focused on major choices;

junior year, the questions were focused on studying abroad and senior year, they were focused on careers, graduate school or other post-graduate plans.

In order to carry out the interviews, the interviewers first made digital recordings of the responses and then transcribed them. Thus, there are points in the written transcriptions where parts are missing due to inaudibility. The transcripts were de-identified in order to maintain the students' confidentiality. Each of the schools used NVivo software to code the data.

Students talk about success

My project focuses on one particular question that was repeated each year the students were interviewed. The question was repeated twice every other round. It was asked once in the middle of the interview: "What would make this a successful semester for you? (What are you really hoping to accomplish this year?). Then again at the end saying: "What would you need to have done in order to think of your _____ year at _____ College as a successful one? (What are you really hoping to accomplish this year?)."

In order to analyze the question, I came up with a list of categories as I saw what was included in the students' particular answers. I started off with a very large list of ways students defined a successful year, such as making friends, having a support system, doing well academically, doing well in major/choosing a major, getting an internship, getting a job, just making it through, doing something great, and studying abroad⁶. These became the codes with which I then read through each student's answer for each round. I marked whether the code applied to a student's answer for each round in an Excel spreadsheet. Upon first reading each student's response, I did not know his or her financial aid status, GPA, standardized test scores or financial aid status.

After reading through the students and coding their responses, I went back again and recoded to make sure I hadn't missed instances of a particular code. After the final round of coding,

⁶ To see the full list of codes, refer to Appendix II.

I moved my data from Excel to SPSS⁷ and analyzed it there. For the purpose of my study, I decided to focus on six codes: do well academically/GPA, the importance of learning, be social/have fun, extracurricular activity involvement, experience the area, and relationship with faculty. I chose these six codes because I felt they were representative of various aspects of college life, and I thought they would best exemplify class distinctions. Using the crosstabs feature on SPSS, I first analyzed the relationship between year⁸ and each individual code to see the frequencies of the codes over time. Then, I performed cross-tabulations to find the relationship between year, the individual code, and controls for financial aid and first generation status. This way, I could see how the frequencies changed over time for students of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1⁹ shows the number of participants who responded to the question about success each year. As you can see from the table, there are 148 students in year 1, 118 in year 2, 128 in year 3 and 128 in year 4. Thus, this information does not include all of the participants interviewed at each school or all of the responses for each year from a particular student. I decided to drop those students whose answers were not substantial enough for me to determine a good code for them. For example, I did not include a student who refused to answer this question. Another reason for the missing participants is attrition. Clarence Gravlee defines attrition as a participant stopping his or her participation in a research study; furthermore, attrition can either be permanent or temporary (Gravlee 2009). In terms of the NECASL study, temporary would mean missing a round or two, whereas permanent would

⁷ Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

⁸ Independent variable

⁹ All tables can be found in Appendix I.

mean dropping out of the study completely. These explanations account for the decline in the number of responses about success for the four years of the study.

The table also shows the number of students interviewed who are first generation college students and who are on financial aid. For the NECASL study, financial aid status comprises a student on the Federal Work Study Program as well as a student who receives any form of merit or grant scholarship. Furthermore, a student's first generation status means that neither of their parents went to college, whereas a non-first generation student is a student who has one or more parents who went to college. Since the NECASL data only offers limited information about participants' backgrounds, I will use financial aid and first generation status as proxies for a student's class background. Thus, I am considering students on financial aid and of first generation status as lower SES students, and I am considering those students not on financial aid and not first generation as upper class students. This is because a college degree is often an indicator of class status and income. Although there are some special cases, generally one's educational attainment corresponds with his or her socioeconomic status¹⁰ (Stevens 2007).

Subsequently, the table shows gender, financial aid status and first generation status of the students each year. Noticeably, there are more female students each year, since two of the five schools were women's colleges. Table 2 shows the frequency for the six codes.

¹⁰ While I assume that a first generation student would not have the same class traits as a non-first generation student, there are exceptions. First generation students may have a higher class standing or the same class background as non-first generation students and students receiving financial aid may be receiving merit or scholarship money and not need-based aid. Therefore, upper class students could still be represented in the financial aid category. Thus, using financial aid and first generation status as proxies for class standing may be problematic.

Tables 3-8 show the frequency of each code every year broken up by financial aid and first generation status¹¹.

Examples of responses

In order to give the reader a sense of the ways participants responded, I focused on a few interviews here to show the students' responses in depth. Although there were many interviews to choose from, I chose these particular students because they represented different class backgrounds, and they mentioned success goals that related to these six categories. Table 9 shows the demographics of the students I chose to include.

In her first year, Elizabeth¹², a white female on financial aid said a successful year would be, "That I leave College really happy and enthusiastic about coming back, and that I get good grades because that's a must for us. I remember that most of the students who came back would tell stories about their life here, that's a lot of hard work, but would also tell us that they only have "A"'s for, I don't know, no more than one "B," so I wouldn't like to be the one that didn't do that great." Thus, Elizabeth mentions grades as a crucial part of her success, but not just any grades; she values getting A's and no more than one B. Like many other first year students, she emphasizes the importance of her GPA. Yet, as she continues, one gets the idea that she also cares about her social and extracurricular life as facets of success. She says, "I love having friends. Also, I'm planning to organize a trip with the International Club to Montreal for the fall recess. That will make this a successful year because I love traveling and I love to see new places."

Although Elizabeth mentions grades, she also discusses her social life and extracurricular activities. Thus, she clearly cares about the balance between life in and outside

¹¹ Students on financial aid and on financial status are grouped together as lower SES, while students not on financial aid and not first generation status are grouped as upper class.

¹² All of the following names are pseudonyms.

the classroom. I coded her for “do well academically,” “social,” “experience,” and “extracurriculars.”

In the fall of her fourth year, Elizabeth has changed her tune. In response to what a successful semester will look like she says, “Well actually being able to turn in all my papers on time and leaving home so I’ll be done on Wednesday, no, Tuesday, and I hope that night I’ll be able to have one or two hours with my friends in which we say our goodbyes.”

Notably, Elizabeth’s idea of success has shifted since her first year. While she says that she would like to turn in her “papers on time,” she does not say anything about wanting to perform well on these papers. Furthermore, her reasoning for wanting to turn in her work early is so that she will have time to say goodbye to her friends before leaving for her winter break. As Elizabeth continues, one gets a sense that she does not want to look back at her time in college and think that she too often prioritized her academic work over spending time with her friends, of whom she says, “We haven’t seen each other much. We’re all focused in front of a computer and I feel like we need to, before I leave [for break], just remember I have friends here and I have something to look forward to when I come back.” While Elizabeth concludes that another part of what would make her semester successful is “obviously being academically successful by actually doing work until the end of the course,” even this comment on her academic work strikes a different chord than her comment from her first year. As a first-year student, she focused on her desire to “get good grades.” By her senior year, her focus is more on the behavior that might lead to good grades, like “doing work until the end of the course.” We see a shift from her focusing on the outcome (good GPA) to the process (sticking with work until the end).

Jeff, a white male not on financial aid, begins his first year oriented around the importance of learning. To him, a successful first year would be, “Just doing well in classes.

Not just like grade wise, but just feeling confident that I'm absorbing the material and that I'm not falling behind in the work." Jeff mentions academics, but he immediately mentions the importance of learning and understanding the material rather than just having a good GPA. This contrasts Elizabeth's response in her first year because she was heavily focused on getting A's and B's. Their contrasting answers illustrate what might be differing attitudes of success, especially in the first year for students from different class backgrounds. Jeff also cares about extracurriculars and friends in his first year. He continues, "I want to have a great basketball season personally and as a team also, and socially, I want to continue to make friends and have a great group of core friends who I can rely on and I really want to experience all the College has to offer. I mean, I've been going to all the dances, I've been going to the drive-in movies, I've done a lot of the stuff they have to offer, so, I really just don't want to sit back and not do work or take this as a cake walk. I really see this as a challenge, and I want to conquer it." This shows that he values a good balance. I coded him for "learning," "extracurriculars," and "social."

In his junior year, Jeff similarly mentions the balance between different aspects of college life. He says: "I guess just enjoying myself throughout the whole year, doing well in classes and enjoying time with your friends." Although he mentions "doing well in classes," he goes on to say that grades "are not overly important to me, like I don't freak out if I don't do that well, but at the same time, I feel like it definitely can affect your view on the semester, but grades aren't the whole, I've never been a grades stickler. I never felt that grades affect your whole future life completely." I coded him for "social," "learning," and "experience."

In contrast to some of the other students' responses, Jeff's values remain fairly consistent over his four years. In the fourth year he begins by talking about classes, athletics,

and jobs. He says, “I think just anytime you do really well in the classes, it’s successful, and in basketball, I think just getting my footing and finding my coaching voice. Also, I think getting myself ready to apply for jobs and things like that. I think if I really fully enjoyed my last year of college and if I can walk away saying I have no regrets that will be a successful year.” I coded this response for “do well academically,” “athletics,” “experience,” and “social.” As one can see, he mentions “do well in school” as one of his top priorities, a shift from his first year. Yet, he still mentions “enjoying college” as another top priority, which is something Elizabeth also mentions in her senior year. Hence, in the fourth year, we see Elizabeth and Jeff’s responses, so different in their first year, converge.

In her first year, Allison, an African American female on financial aid says, “I count success as good grades and trying my absolute best, but my parents would say that my absolute best was an A. So therefore, if I did not get an A, I was not trying my hardest.” Allison feels strongly about her grades and her parents care about them too. She continues to talk about a successful first year in terms of her social life and experience saying, “I want to actually participate in the stuff, like go to the Harvard/Yale game, go to an MIT frat party or whatever, go to Boston and just have fun at night or something. Basically just take advantage of where my college is because we’re in the middle of everything.” Like Elizabeth and Jeff, Allison also mentions “taking advantage of the area.” Since this phrase recurs in various students’ responses, it is evident that many students desire experiencing college outside solely academics. I coded Allison’s first year response for “do well academically,” “social,” and “experience.”

In her second year, Allison still mentions grades, but she also mentions learning. She says, “I want to get really good grades. I just want to be knowledgeable in all the things that I’m learning and all the things that I’m doing instead of just being here. I want to make it

more worthwhile. I just want to learn how to learn better and learn how to get good grades.” She says, “I want to learn how to learn better,” therefore illustrating that she recognizes the importance of learning in academics. However, she still mentions “get good grades,” so it is clear she is still concerned with her GPA. I coded her for “do well academically,” and “learning.”

Allison returns to prioritizing grades over learning in her senior year. She says, “This is going to sound really bad and materialistic, but I want to get A’s. I really need to do well this semester. If I can max out of all my classes and if I was not as stressed about applications and just got all my work done.” She continues to say success would be: “to get into grad school and not dying in the process.” Since she mentions graduate school, perhaps she shifts her focus back to grades rather than learning because she needs to keep them high in order to get accepted to graduate school.

Leah, an African American female first generation student on financial aid says success in her first year would be, “a GPA of 3.6, at least.” This response is reminiscent of Allison’s in the first year, another student on aid. The interviewer then asks if she is content socially. She responds, “I’ve been a little, not depressed but, I don’t know if it’s homesickness, but just missing my friends, and then me and my boyfriend just broke up. I mean it’s not much of a social life, so I’ve been wondering if I want to transfer, go to a coed.” I coded her for “do well academically,” and “social.”

Leah continues to see grades as an important facet to her overall success as a sophomore. She says success would be to have “a 4.0. Okay, my reality, a 3.3, yeah, if I had a 3.3 GPA I’d be like the happiest person alive.” While Leah continues to mention the importance of getting a good GPA, her goal GPA is lower than her first year. She also talks about success in terms of other factors. She says success would be, “Getting all my next year

plans settled and established, like my internships and going abroad and all that, and just being able to have fun while I'm doing it because I'm a bit of a socialite, so I want to be on the scene, but then again I know I got to do the studying. Once I feel like I've had a good balance in the end, then I think I've had a successful year." Here she mentions her social life more positively than before; like other students in my sample, she emphasizes the importance of the balance between social life and academic life.

In her third year, Leah says a successful year would be, "Getting a 4.0, just like getting good grades and getting my GPA back up to where it should be. I know I keep bringing it up, but that's kind of what I've been focused on lately. And other than that, I feel like things in my life are well, so school is the only thing that I really feel like I have control over right now, and can enhance because I want to." Leah's GPA goal returns to that of her first year, showing that grades are a central aspect of her success in college.

In her first year, Reese, a white female not on financial aid has similar values as Jeff. She says, "I'd like to get good grades, but that's not number one on the list because you can learn without getting good grades. I want to make more friends, and have fun I guess. It'd be good to have everything be about equal. High school, there was a rumor that you have to pick between sleep, social life and work, whereas here I feel like that's much more balanceable." Immediately in the first year, she prioritizes learning over grades. She also cares about the balance between social life and academics, which is something Leah mentioned also, but not until her second year. I coded Reese's response for "learning," and "social."

In her sophomore year, Reese continues to stress the balance between social life and academic life. She says, "I guess it would be successful if I finish getting my act together and make sure I'm on top of my work, but also having fun at the same time and not being the

kid who locks herself in her room.” In her junior year, she particularly focuses on post-college plans in her response saying, “Overall, I want to find a job. I guess that’s the ultimate goal of this whole college thing. I don’t really expect to get the dream job right out of college; I don’t think it works that way, unless you’re super lucky. Also, I guess just take advantage of College while I have it.” In contrast to Allison who wants to apply to graduate school, Reese wants to get a job. Reese also mentions “taking advantage of college,” which has come up in many of the students’ responses after the first year.

Emma, an Asian student on financial aid accentuates grades over learning in her first year by saying, “Well, definitely I would like to get all A’s if possible.” As she continues, she represents one of the few students who mentions the importance of faculty relationships. She says, “I would like to have good relations with my professors because I do think they play a big part on how you’ve grown. I would like to have them for the next four years and beyond to be a resource and a friend and someone to help guide me towards certain aspects of my life.” In the rest of her response, she mentions social life, in saying, “I definitely want to make a lot of friends and take full advantage of what College has to offer.” I coded her for “do well academically,” “relationships with faculty,” and “experience.” She also mentions “take full advantage of what College has to offer.” This appears in many students’ responses regardless of their class background.

Emma’s responses change very little from her first year to her sophomore year. She says success in her sophomore year would be, “A really good GPA, having an internship for the summer, and I think getting to really know my professors this year.” The only change in her senior year is that she mentions finding a job. She says, “Definitely finding a job would be a perk, although I would hate to say for finding a job to be the culmination of everything that I’ve learned at College. A successful year would be coming out as a very confident, self-

sufficient, independent person, and knowing that I've tried my best and coming out with certain relationships with professors and other students and friends." In all, her responses show little change over her four years of college, suggesting that her college experience was probably not affected by others around her.

After looking more in depth at a few students' responses to the success question, a few interesting trends emerge. First, some of the biggest distinctions between students on aid and not on aid or first generation and not first generation occur in the first year. This is especially true in terms of prioritizing GPA versus academic learning. Furthermore, I found that both the students from lower SES and upper class backgrounds mentioned the importance of balancing academic and social life. In addition, the students from both class backgrounds mentioned the importance of taking advantage of their college and college life. Also, the students on financial aid were more likely to mention graduate school, while students not on aid were more likely to mention getting a job as the ultimate goal. Moreover, the students both on and not on financial aid mentioned extracurricular activities and athletics as important measures of success. Lastly, the students on financial aid were more likely to mention the importance of relationships with faculty as an attribute of success. These are the trends I found by looking at just a few examples; however, in the following section, I will show the general trends of all the responses through my hypotheses.

GPA and Learning

According to Shamus Khan, lower SES students view working hard and achieving good grades as their definition of success and moving ahead. Consequently, upper class students value the actual act of learning more than their grades as an indicator of success (Khan, 2011). *My first hypothesis for "do well academically" was that lower-income students would be more likely to mention "do well academically" each year.* Second, I expected that the students from lower SES

backgrounds would mention this less over time. Third, I expected that upper class would mention GPA steadily over time, with no increase or decrease. In terms of learning, I expected the upper class students to mention learning more frequently than lower SES students each year. Furthermore, I expected that mentioning learning would increase for both the students from upper class and lower SES backgrounds.

Relationship with faculty

Annette Lareau finds that lower SES families are less comfortable talking with teachers and authority figures than upper class families because the lower SES families cannot relate to these figures as well as the upper class families can (2003). Furthermore, according to Aries and Berman, lower SES students are less likely to seek help from faculty members because they feel asking for help would lower their pride (Aries and Berman 2013). However, they also mentioned that over time lower SES students saw upper class students asking for help and began asking too (Aries and Berman 2013). Thus, in terms of the code “relationship with faculty,” *my first hypothesis was that the upper class students would be more likely than the lower SES students to mention faculty each year. However, I predicted that students from both upper class and lower SES backgrounds would mention this code increasingly over time.*

Social

Lower SES students often have other commitments, which hinder their ability to socialize as frequently as upper-class students (Stuber 2011). For example, they may need to hold a job to pay for part of their tuition or they may have greater pressure from their parents than upper class students to perform well academically (Stuber 2011). *First, I expected lower SES students to mention things that would fall under the code “being social” less than upper class students each year. However, for both groups, I expected students to mention social life most frequently in the freshman and senior years because freshman year everyone is new to campus, while senior year students want to spend time together before they graduate.*

Extracurriculars

According to Stuber, upper class students are more involved in extracurricular activities than lower SES students because often times there are financial and time constraints that make it difficult for lower SES students to participate in these activities (Stuber 2011). Furthermore, many of the extracurricular organizations constitute the characteristics of upper class capital, making it easier for these students to join (Stuber 2011). However, she also finds that in comparison to lower SES students at Big State School, lower SES students at Benton College¹³ are more involved in extracurricular activities (Stuber 2011). This, she argues, is due to the fact that small colleges often have programs and initiatives in place that encourage lower SES students to get involved outside the classroom (Stuber 2011). Therefore, *I hypothesized that upper class students would mention extracurriculars more frequently each year. Second, I hypothesized that lower SES students would mention this more over time, while upper class students would mention this less over time.*

Experience

Lower SES students often have other commitments that make it hard for them to take in the full college experience. According to Aries and Berman, lower SES students frequently have to use their own money to support their families. Furthermore, they may have to offer other support, such as caring for sick relatives, which pulls them away from time at school (Aries and Berman, 2013). Therefore, *I expected the upper class students to mention the importance of experiencing college and the area more frequently than the lower SES students each year. However, over time, I expected the frequency to increase for both groups because of Britton and Baxter's argument that education institutions make class assimilation possible (Britton and Baxter 2001).*

¹³Pseudonym for the small liberal arts college in Stuber's study.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

GPA/do well academically

Drawing from Khan's research that lower SES students view working hard and achieving good grades as their definition of success and moving ahead, *I predicted that lower SES students would be more likely to mention "do well academically" each year* (Khan 2011). I also drew this conclusion from Aries and Bermans' argument that upper class white students have the highest grade point average and lower SES black students have the lowest grade point average, which they measured by looking at grade point average, Phi Beta Kappa membership, and Latin honors distinctions (Aries and Berman 2013). Since upper class students tend to have higher GPAs according to Aries and Berman, I assumed lower SES students would be more conscious of this, and thus, value GPAs more than upper class students. Yet, as one can see from Tables 3 and 10, besides the first year, upper class students are actually more likely to mention GPA. Additionally, the fact that lower SES students mention GPA and grades more frequently in their first year, but then less in subsequent years, compliments Britton and Baxter's findings that lower SES students adapt to the cultural capital of their upper class peers in a college environment and begin to assimilate (Britton and Baxter 2001). This shift is shown through Allison, a student on financial aid, who says in her first year, "I count success as good grades," but then in her second year, "I just want to learn how to learn."

Moreover, *I expected that students from lower SES backgrounds would mention GPA less over time*, which was supported by the data. Furthermore, although I *expected that upper class students would mention GPA steadily over time*, their responses actually decreased like the lower SES students' responses. Perhaps this is because students are more focused on non-academic aspects of college as times goes on, which is something Stuber implies in the concept of a

“resume building culture” (2011). In this sense, students participate in clubs, Greek organizations, internships, study away programs, community service and other activities in order to network for their future (Stuber 2011). Thus, as times goes on they focus less on GPA and more on these activities.

Learning

Upper class students value the actual act of learning more than their grades as an indicator of success (Khan 2011). Thus, the mentality of the elite is to defy the idea that success comes from working hard and instead, attribute their achievements to passive notions, such as their overall experience (Kahn 2011). These findings led me to *expect upper class students to mention learning more frequently than lower SES students each year*. This is exactly what the data showed in every year except for the third, supporting Khan’s study that lower SES and upper class students view academic success differently (2011). Jeff exemplifies this in his first year response when he says, “I want to do well in classes. Not just like grade wise, but feeling confident that I’m absorbing the material.” Furthermore, *I expected that mentioning learning would increase for both the students from upper class and lower SES backgrounds*. However, in contrast to my hypotheses, it actually decreased for both groups. Similar to students’ responses relating to “do well academically,” the responses relating to learning also suggest that lower SES students adapt to the cultural capital of their upper class peers in a college environment and begin to assimilate (Britton and Baxter 2001).

Relationships with faculty

Annette Lareau (2003) finds that lower SES families are less comfortable talking with teachers and authority figures than upper class families because the lower SES families cannot relate to these figures as well as the upper class families can. Furthermore, according to Aries and Berman, lower SES students are less likely to seek help from faculty members

because they feel asking for help would lower their pride. Thus, *I hypothesized that upper class students would be more likely than the lower SES students to mention faculty each year* (Aries and Berman 2013). However, according to Aries and Berman, over time lower SES students saw upper class students asking for help and began asking too. Hence, drawing from this research, *I also predicted that students from both upper class and lower SES backgrounds would mention this code increasingly over time* (2013). The first hypothesis was correct every year except for the first year. Yet it is interesting because in the qualitative examples I chose, the only student who mentions this is Emma, who is a student on financial aid, and she brings it up every year. Nevertheless, this directly contrasts Lareau's findings as well as Aries' and Berman's. It also counters Britton and Baxter's idea that lower SES students adapt to the cultural capital of their upper class peers in a college environment and begin to assimilate (2001). Instead, if also considering Lareau's and Aries' and Berman's findings, it suggests that lower SES students do not adapt to the cultural capital of their peers (Britton and Baxter 2001). I also had to reject my second hypothesis. Both groups mentioned success goals relating to relationships with faculty less over time, with the exception of the increase after the first year in upper class students. Since this was not mentioned all that much in the responses, perhaps students may not generally associate relationships with faculty as a measure of success.

Social

Lower SES students often have other commitment to put them through college, such as jobs and a greater pressure to perform academically, which hinders their ability to socialize as frequently as upper class students (Stuber 2011). Likewise, upper class students are often more comfortable making friends at college because they are more likely to have experienced similar students at their high schools, and they have a "cultural understanding" passed down from family and peers that they are supposed to go out at night, make friends

and be involved with the campus (Stuber 2011: 48). Thus, *I expected lower SES students to mention things that would fall under the code “social” less than upper class students each year.* However, for both groups, *I expected students to mention social life most frequently in the freshman and senior years* because freshman year everyone is new to campus, while senior year students want to spend time together before they graduate.

My first hypothesis was not supported; in fact, upper class students did not mention success goals related to social life more frequently than lower SES students. This is represented by the examples of student responses; the balance of social life and academic life is mentioned by multiple students across classes. For example, in her first year, Allison mentions a successful year would be, “To get out more...and just have fun.” Similarly, Reese notes in her second year that success is, “If everything [academics and social life] would be about equal.” Additionally, my second hypothesis was supported for upper class students, but not for lower SES students; they were most likely to say this in the first and third years. The outcome for lower SES students can be understood by the finding that lower SES students face a difficult divide in their relationships with their friends from home; they often come from communities where not everyone goes to college, so as a result, they find it difficult to relate to their peers from home after spending time away (Aries and Berman 2013). Likewise, their home friends begin to alienate them and call them “outsiders” (Aries and Berman 2013). Thus, according to Aries and Berman’s research, in contrast to their upper class peers, (after the first year) lower SES students may value social life most in the junior year because they spend freshman and sophomore year working out the balance between home friends and school friends.

Extracurriculars

Stuber suggests that upper class students are more involved in extracurricular activities at both Big State University¹⁴ and Benton College¹⁵ than their lower SES peers. Similarly, upper class students are more likely to value internships and study abroad opportunities, while lower SES students are more involved in Residential Assistant programs and other extracurriculars that offer financial means as well as leadership experience (Stuber 2011). However, she also finds that in comparison to lower SES students at Big State School, lower SES students at Benton College¹⁶ are more involved in extracurricular activities (Stuber 2011). This, she argues, is due to the fact that small colleges often have programs and initiatives in place that encourage lower SES students to get involved outside the classroom (Stuber 2011). Therefore, after reading Stuber's work on the student involvement outside the classroom, *I hypothesized that upper-class students would mention extracurricular more frequently each year. Second, I hypothesized that lower SES students would mention this more over time, while upper class students would mention this less over time.*

My first hypothesis was generally supported with the exception of the second year, when lower SES students mentioned things related to "extracurriculars" more frequently. This is represented in the examples of responses, in which many lower SES students focused on mentioning grades in their first year, but then brought up extracurriculars in their second. This suggests that assimilation to the dominant cultural capital occurs between the first and second year for all students (Britton and Baxter 2001). In terms of the upper class, my second hypothesis was correct with the exception of the increase after the first year. However, in terms of lower SES students, my second hypothesis was not supported because

¹⁴ A large state university

¹⁵ A small highly selective college

¹⁶ Pseudonym for the small liberal arts college in Stuber's study

they mentioned things to do with extracurriculars less over time with the exception of the increase in the second year. Since lower SES students came in with less focus on extracurriculars than their upper class peers, my research suggests that in contrast to Stevens' findings, higher education institutions might in fact allow cultural capital to converge (2007). However, perhaps the response comes up more in the junior and senior year for upper class students as compared to lower SES students because often times there are financial and time constraints that make it difficult for lower SES students to participate in these activities (Stuber 2011). This would suggest that higher education institutions still reproduce class inequalities (Stevens 2007).

Experience

Lower SES students often have other commitments that make it hard for them to take in the full college experience. According to Aries and Berman, lower SES students frequently have to use their own money to support their families. Furthermore, they may have to offer other support, such as caring for sick relatives, which pulls them away from time at school (Aries and Berman 2013). Likewise, students from upper class backgrounds have often grown up traveling, so they are used to having experienced places around the world (Aries and Seider 2005). Therefore drawing from the research, *I expected the upper class students to mention the importance of experiencing college and the area more frequently than the lower SES students each year.* However, over time, *I expected the frequency to increase for both groups because of* Britton and Baxter's argument that education institutions make class assimilation possible (Britton and Baxter 2001).

My first hypothesis was supported in the freshman and senior years; upper class students were more likely to mention success goals related to "experience." This is true for Jeff who says in his first year, "I really want to experience all the College has to offer."

However, in the middle years, lower SES students were more likely to mention these responses. Therefore, my hypothesis supports Britton and Baxter's research that higher education institutions allow lower SES students to adapt to the cultural capital of their upper class peers. Similar to extracurriculars, this shift also happened largely between the first and second years.

My other hypotheses were not supported for lower or upper class students. Lower SES students mentioned goals related to experience more after their first year and less in subsequent years. Similarly, upper class students mentioned these goals less after their first year and more in subsequent years. The fact that this goal doesn't come up the same amount for each group shows that lower SES students may have less chance to experience college because of their other responsibilities (Aries and Berman 2013). Yet when I was looking at examples of students' responses, many students across classes mentioned "take advantage of college." Therefore, this perhaps points to the fact that all students desire this as a success goal, but not all students can actually attain it because of their class backgrounds.

The significance of the second year

Something that comes up repeatedly in my findings is the exception of the second year. The frequency of mentioning extracurricular activities is generally higher in upper class students, except for the second year. Consequently, the frequency of mentioning relationships with faculty is higher for lower SES students besides the second year. Madison, a female student not on financial aid discusses both academics and relationships with faculty in her sophomore year. She says success would be, "Learning better study habits, just adapting more, and getting better relationships with my professors." I coded her for "learning" and "relationships with faculty." She follows this second year trend because she doesn't mention extracurricular activities, but she does mention relationships with faculty. In

contrast, Josh, a male student on financial aid said success in his sophomore year would be, “If I got that balance between my work and my activities and do all the activities that I want to do.” I coded his response for “do well academically” and “extracurriculars.” Therefore, he meets the second year exception because he is a student on financial aid mentioning success goals related to extracurricular activities.

Furthermore, the frequency for mentioning goals related to experience is generally higher for upper class students as well, except in the second year¹⁷. For example, Lilly, a female on financial aid said success in her sophomore year would be, “Having an experience or doing something positive where it actually helps towards what I want to do in the future.” Thus, one can see she is focused on the general experience, so I coded her for “experience.” Moreover, Annie, a female student not on financial aid said success in her sophomore year would be, “That I understand statistics fully, and that I am finally writing better papers, that’s like the big one.” She is focused on academics, most specifically learning because she mentions she wants to “understand statistics;” thus, I coded her response for “learning.”

The trend in the second year in “extracurriculars” and “experience” can be explained by Britton and Baxter’s argument that higher education institutions allow the cultural capital of students from different backgrounds to converge (2001). From this research and the results of my own, I attribute the second year to the time when lower SES students adapt to the cultural capital of their upper class peers. In this sense, lower SES students acknowledge that upper class students are actively involved in extracurricular activities and interested in taking advantage of the college experience, which draws them to these success goals in their own second year. Furthermore, Stevens argues that “the transition to college is a seamless web of interdependencies” for upper class students (2007:147). This can also explain the

¹⁷ And senior year

difference in the second year. Upper class first year students may have an easy time transitioning, whereas lower SES students may have a difficult time adapting to college, but the problems then do not exist as much in the second year. Consequently, the shift back in the subsequent years suggests that class inequalities still exist at higher education institutions (Stevens 2007). Perhaps this shift can be attributed to the fact that lower SES students realize after trying to take advantage of experiences and participate in extracurricular activities that they do not have the time to fit these in with their other responsibilities, such as jobs, which they must uphold to help pay for school (Collier and Morgan 2007). Nevertheless, this trend in the second year stands out and illustrates the way in which both class differences and convergences appear.

Reproducing class at elite colleges: furthering distinctions or allowing cultural capital to converge?

In terms of reproducing class, there is still a question of whether or not higher education institutions fully allow the cultural capital of students from different class backgrounds to converge. Stevens (2007) argues that class inequalities still exist, while Britton and Baxter (2001) argue these institutions allow assimilation to occur. From my research, I found that this varies by success goal. Some of the success goals showed that these institutions do in fact allow the cultural capital of students from different class backgrounds to converge. For example, lower SES students mentioned GPA more in their first year than upper class students, but it decreased in subsequent years for both groups, thus showing the merging of cultural capital. Similarly, the fact that social life and learning had similar trajectories for both socioeconomic groups shows the reduction in class inequalities.

However, the two topics with the most division between class groups were extracurricular involvement and experience. On average,¹⁸ upper class students were more likely to mention extracurricular activities. This affirms Stuber's point that lower SES students have more barriers to face in terms of participating in extracurricular activities (2011). Similarly, upper class students are more likely on average¹⁹ to mention success goals relating to experience. Thus, the results of these two topics reinforce Stevens' "reproduction thesis" that higher education institutions perpetuate inequalities (Stevens 2007). It is interesting that these two topics are the most stratified by class because they are not mandatory elements of college. In contrast, academics are a mandatory element of college, yet success by GPA did not seem to be as stratified by class. This supports Stuber's implication that the most important lessons one learns in college take place outside of the classroom (2011). Thus, although academics, learning, and grades are part of the overall college experience, they are not the only ways for college students to learn and grow.

CONCLUSION

In all, this research shows that students' definitions of success are one way to see class differences at small elite institutions. It is evident that students from dissimilar class backgrounds view success differently. Yet at a higher education institution, students can adapt to different forms of cultural capital because of their peers around them.

Moreover, social inequalities have both individual and societal implications. In terms of individual implications, students from lower SES backgrounds may look at college as a way to be upwardly mobile. This gives lower SES students added pressure. Since higher education institutions and the people part of them prefer the cultural capital of the upper

¹⁸ Besides the exception of the second year

¹⁹ With the exception of the second year

class, lower SES students may feel pressure to adapt to these tastes in order to succeed. Thus, they face difficulty navigating success based on what they see as success and what others expect them to see as success. Furthermore, upper class students also have pressures, but they are of a different type. They have societal pressure; as agents of society's preferred cultural capital, they have certain standards to uphold and an expectation to share their cultural capital. In addition, they have familial pressure to uphold their cultural capital.

Small elite colleges can also learn from this study. They should be aware of the social inequalities that exist and work to reduce them. As Stuber mentioned, these small elite colleges often have programs in place to facilitate lower SES students' involvement in extracurricular activities (2011). Therefore, they have pressure to implement these programs in order to foster the aggregation of cultural capital for lower SES students. Hence, it is important to be aware of the way different students view success and how these views can be affected by their class backgrounds.

Furthermore, my research also offers insight on the most important aspects of success for students at small liberal arts colleges. These interviews were performed at liberal arts institutions, where learning different subjects is supposed to be a facet of a student's overall experience, yet very few students in these interviews mentioned learning as a characteristic of success. Consequently, GPA was one of the more frequent responses. Perhaps since students got into these selective colleges partially because of their good grades, they have difficulty letting go of the concept of getting a good GPA. Moreover, they feel pressure to have a stellar GPA to keep up with their classmates and mold to the competitive nature of others. In contrast to learning and cultural capital, GPA is a tangible way for a student to show success. Thus, in the future higher education institutions should think about

the way they want students to define success in hopes that students will adapt to these success models.

Limitations and suggestion for further research

One way that my research was limited was in the restricted amount of administrative data. I measured class based on financial aid status and first generation status, yet this is not a comprehensive or foolproof measure of class. It would be more accurate if I was able to analyze class based on the students' family incomes and parents' occupations. Furthermore, financial aid is a difficult measure of class because being on financial aid implies a wide spectrum, and similarly, not being on aid also implies a wide variety of cases. For instance, some people on financial aid may be receiving just a small amount of aid, while others may be receiving full scholarship. Additionally, some students who do not qualify for aid may come from families that are struggling to pay, while others may come from families who have no problem paying the tuition.

I am also limited in the sense that I didn't perform the interviews myself. Thus, I did not have the opportunity to ask my own follow up questions that may have furthered my research findings. Furthermore, in extended research I could have determined the effect gender and race has on success in addition to class. Additionally, if I had more resources, I would like to study the relationship between learning and GPA in a more in depth way as well as focus in on my six codes more. Moreover, I began to notice a class trend between graduate school and jobs; I observed that lower SES students often mentioned graduate school as a post-graduation plan, whereas upper class students mentioned finding a job. Thus, in further research I could determine if this hypothesis is true. Finally, I began with 35 codes, but I only focused on 6. If I had more time, I would have grouped some of the codes together in order to have more responses for each category. For example, extracurriculars could include athletics too, and summer opportunities could include

internships and jobs, and so on. This way, I could perhaps get a more accurate representation of class distinctions in terms of collegiate success.

APPENDIX I: Tables

Table 1- Descriptive Statistics

N	148	118	128	128
Receiving financial aid	67%	68%	70%	72%
First generation student	18%	19%	20%	19%
Both First Generation and receiving aid	15%	17%	17%	16%
Gender: Males	29%	24%	27%	30%
Gender: Females	71%	76%	73%	70%

Table 2-Overall Patterns in codes

GPA	85%	75%	67%	56%
Learning	11%	8%	4%	4%
Relationships with Faculty	9%	11%	6%	4%
Social	62%	29%	28%	44%
Extracurriculars	16%	20%	10%	6%
Experience	15%	7%	9%	9%

Table 3-GPA by class

On aid/first generation	
Y1	91%
Y2	70%
Y3	64%
Y4	52%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	84%
Y2	77%
Y3	68%
Y4	57%

Table 4-Learning by class

Learning	
On aid/first generation	
Y1	9%
Y2	0%
Y3	9%
Y4	0%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	11%
Y2	9%
Y3	3%
Y4	5%

Table 5-Relationship with faculty by class

Relationship with Faculty	
On aid/first generation	
Y1	14%
Y2	5%
Y3	5%
Y4	0%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	8%
Y2	12%
Y3	6%
Y4	5%

Table 6-Social by class

Social	
On aid/first generation	
Y1	55%
Y2	30%
Y3	41%
Y4	38%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	63%
Y2	29%
Y3	26%
Y4	45%

Table 7-Extracurriculars by class

Extracurriculars	
On aid/first generation	
Y1	9%
Y2	25%
Y3	5%
Y4	5%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	17%
Y2	18%
Y3	11%
Y4	7%

Table 8-Experience by class

Experience	
On aid/first generation	
Y1	9%
Y2	10%
Y3	9%
Y4	0%
Not on Aid/Not First generation	
Y1	16%
Y2	6%
Y3	9%
Y4	10%

Table 9-Key for examples of responses

Student	Race	Financial Aid?	First Generation?
Elizabeth	White	Yes	No
Jeff	White	No	No
Allison	African American	Yes	No
Leah	African American	Yes	Yes
Reese	White	No	No
Emma	Asian	Yes	No

Table 10 –Hypothesis expectations and results by code

	Expectations	Results
GPA/do well academically		
Who says it more frequently?	Lower SES	Correct for first year only
Lower SES over time	Decrease	Correct
Upper class over time	Stay same	Incorrect –decreases
Learning		
Who says it more frequently?	Upper class	Correct-except for third year
Lower SES over time	Increase	Incorrect
Upper class over time	Increase	Incorrect
Relationship with faculty		
Who says it more frequently?	Upper class	Correct-besides first year
Lower SES over time	Increase	Incorrect
Upper class over time	Increase	Incorrect-increase after first year, then decrease
Social		
Who says it more frequently?	Upper class	Incorrect
Lower SES over time	Decrease after first year then increase after third	Incorrect-decrease after first and increase after second, then decrease after third
Upper class over time	Decrease after first year then increase after third	Correct
Extracurriculars		
Who says it more frequently?	Upper class	Correct except year 2
Lower SES over time	Increase	Incorrect-Increase after first year then decrease
Upper class over time	Decrease	Correct except for increase in second year
Experience		
Who is more likely to say?	Upper class	Correct- first and last years only
Lower SES over time	Increase	Incorrect-increase then decrease
Upper class over time	Increase	Incorrect-decrease then increase

APPENDIX II: CODEBOOK

1. Social
2. Have a support system
3. Do well academically/GPA
4. Do well in major/choose a major
5. Get an internship
6. Get a job
7. Just make it through

8. Do something great
9. Be happy
10. Find summer opportunities
11. Study abroad
12. Not concerned with grades
13. Limit stress
14. Extracurriculars
15. Relationship with faculty
16. Move ahead
17. Complete a thesis/honors project
18. Self-pressure
19. Parental pressure
20. Athletics
21. Graduate school
22. Be better person-college isn't just about the classroom
23. Experience
24. Not procrastinate
25. Learn
26. Be comfortable in the school environment
27. Assimilate
28. Have a boyfriend
29. Broaden horizons
30. Learn to manage budget
31. Network
32. Be ready to leave
33. Graduate
34. Stay healthy
35. Feel successful even without job at graduation

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