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Issues of Blondenness: Identity, Education, and Experience

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ISSUES OF BLONDENESS:
IDENTITY, EDUCATION, AND EXPERIENCE

by

KELLY C. BLACKSTON-CAIL

(Under the Direction of John Weaver)

ABSTRACT

This narrative study is an inquiry into the lives of five women and their personal identity development as it is related to the generalizations and negative stereotypes based on hair color among the female gender. The concept of bloneness as it is related to hair color and identity is the primary focus of this study based on the responsibility of social construction on the development of this image. The subject's willingness to participate provided many viable insights about their lived experiences in life, their education and/or professional careers. This study shows how each participant faced these generalizations and negativity which focused on their hair color and gender. Uncovered are the commonalities of their experiences and motivating factors which lead to their success.

INDEX WORDS: Stereotype, Discrimination, Generalization, Identity, Gender, Blonde, Myth, Cultural Studies, Popular Culture

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by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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2007

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Electronic Version Approved:

December 2007

DEDICATION

This original research study is dedicated to my loving grandmother, Nee Maw without whose generous love and support, both emotional and financial I doubtfully would have ever embarked on or taken this final step in my education. You have, throughout my life set an unprecedented example of what it means to love our God, our selves, and one another. I thank you Nee Maw for believing in me and for always being so willing to offer your endless support. Whether it was to watch after Clint, pray endlessly for me asking our God to direct my writing and knowledge, or to pay for yet another semester of tuition, you have always been there. Thank you for all of the delicious treats you always sent my classmates and me to share during our classes. The homemade bread, cookies, and cakes gave us something to look forward to during our long nights in Statesboro. Thank you again for your unending encouragement and love. I hope I have made you very proud. I love you much more than these simple words are able to express.

His Word is true. Philippians 4:13. “All things *are* possible through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

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To my beautiful son Clint, thank you for understanding the countless times I had to say, “Sorry Sweetheart, Mommy has her own homework to do tonight.” I am sorry too for missing your first and only swim meet! I knew you would win. I promise I will make it up to you. The weekends and summers are ours again! You are the brightest sunshine in my rain, the wind in my sail, the very light on my darkest path and I know more than anything that my love for you will be the light that always shines and will never fail. I love you more than you will ever know.

Mom and Dad you have always told me that I could do whatever I wanted to do. You never pushed me nor stood in the way of my dreams. Thank you for always letting me know

“I had options.” Investigating those many options have led me to the level of confidence I now have. Dad, I finally “finished” my formal education. Mom, I offer humble and insufficient thanks for always helping me with Clint. I know it was often inconvenient and out of the way for you to go pick him up, or meet me at Crossroads Shopping Center in order for me to make my weekly sojourn to the Boro.

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I must not forget my constant feline companion Jack. Always close by, and usually in my lap whenever I turned on the computer. Once I sat down, whether to read, or pound away at the keyboard Jack knew I would be there for an extended period of time. My lap remained warm for the duration of this composition.

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In memory of

Ashlee Wright Kraft.

May 20, 1988–June 9, 2007

You are my first and most precious niece and goddaughter. The moral, civic, and biblical standards by which you lived your exemplary life are those that other young women should only hope to obtain. Living for today with never any regrets of yesterday secured your place in heaven for an eternity with our Lord. Your call home which was known by Him since before you were ever born was way too soon for us. We will see you again though Ash, when the “Roll the Roll is Called up Yonder” we’ll all be there, together at home with you and our Heavenly Father. I miss you, “Grace” and your radiant smile, your infectious dedication to His call, and your zest for life and happiness.

Mercy me, “I can only imagine” what our eyes will see!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While contemplating the various topics from which to write a doctoral dissertation the plethora of choices at first seemed endless. As I considered each and every possibility, I knew that I wanted to write about something other than the innate motivation of learners, achievement and reading scores, or the specific uses of instructional practices within a particular targeted population of students. I wanted to write about something unusual yet relevant to my own life as well as those of my students. Over the years my professors would say, “Write about whatever you want to write about, it’s your dissertation, write about what interest you, or choose a topic that is meaningful to you.” “It’ll come to you!” they would say with confidence.

This guidance, while genuine and certainly warranted me the decision making independence and personal ownership I so needed, still left me with little consolation about choosing an appropriate topic, which would bring something new to the table of educational practices or add a new dimension to the wonderful work of curriculum theorists I had become accustomed to reading. A review of these theorists’ writings gave me an even larger rein of topics as I considered their own contributions of such ideas as curriculum and the holocaust, whiteness, sexual orientation, concerns and issues related to the African American male, cultural responsiveness, discrimination, popular culture, the curriculum of consumption, and even rap music. But what did I know about? More importantly, what did I want to learn more about? Could I possibly draw from my own experiences, and more importantly to me, what in the world am I interested in enough to be willing to submerge myself into for approximately two plus years? An even larger

looming question was the concern that whatever topic I choose should be beneficial to others that I precede and should also make a positive contribution in this ever so important field of education? These were some of the many questions that haunted me as I pondered the multitude of choices.

They were right though; just as my professors had predicted, eventually a topic did finally come to me. My growing interest in the topic of identity, and what that brings to the chemistry of a classroom full of impressionable and uniquely different children slowly began to emerge out from the depths of the wilderness and entanglement of my mind. As I continued to survey my options, I remembered the advice of McCracken, (1988) who suggested that the investigator, (*me*) should, “Give a detailed and systematic appreciation of his or her own personal experience with the topic of interest” and that, “The investigator must inventory and examine the associations, incidents, and assumptions that surround the topic in his or her own mind” (p.32). Suddenly, my own identity began to surface without any effort or calling. The meaning of identity in itself is a broad one, with definitions ranging from physical identity to cultural affiliation. Here, I will include the considerations of each.

One’s physical appearance is usually the first thing we notice when we meet someone new. Skin tone, wardrobe, hairstyle, cleanliness, and general grooming habits are among the early obvious traits that catch the attention of others. Their image is then fixed into our minds and it is that very same image that resurfaces whenever we hear their name. Physical identity speaks volumes about how we see ourselves and how others see us. This is how we naturally tend to “sum someone up,” even when we make concerted efforts to be open minded, unbiased, and non-judgmental. It has often been said that, “A

first impression, is a lasting impression,” and then those words are usually seconded by, “You will never get a second chance to make a good first impression.” Generally, these frequently spoken and often overused clichés are directed toward the physical appearance of a person rather than those of intellectual exchange. Assumptions and broad generalizations of intelligence, class, and even professional affiliation are commonly made based on initial these first impressions, and more specifically they stem directly from one’s physical appearance. In addition, it is not uncommon, for these generalizations and judgmental perceptions to stem from negative assumptions or stereotypes based on a certain cultural affiliation, nationality, or ethnic background. Today, stereotypes are often made based on a particular wardrobe or even how baggy your pants are worn.

The following is a study of my research findings, which will seek to negate the commonly accepted myth and preconceived image ideals directed toward European-American women with blonde hair. A “myth” as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1999) is, “a traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or imaginary persons and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena; a widely held but **false** notion; a fictitious, thing, or idea”. So then, in this study it is my goal to prove the lack of any credible evidence to suggest that these preconceived ideas about women with blonde hair are or ever was warranted. It is my goal here to present factual information based on the real life histories of my subjects, which clearly reveals that the popular culture myth and image of, women who are blonde, should have no less intelligence than their non-blonde counterparts. Further, I will show that hair color has nothing to do with either educational or professional success.

The exploration and research into the topic of hair in general and the many implications it's style and color portray in regards to identity, have amazed me at how prevalent the subject of hair is in our modern society. I would have never guessed there would be so many volumes of non-fictional literature published on the subject of hair. The more I began to read the more I wanted to read and the more I thought about the subject, the more significance to the topic I would discover in my own everyday life and identity construction. I even began to notice the significant amount of consumer spending based on hair care products, hair coloring, and the services of barbers and hairdressers. Women and men alike openly admit to having "good" or "bad hair" days. Men are often preoccupied with receding hairlines as women seem to be with hair style or color.

Hair is not only a common subject of daily water-cooler discussions, but from an historical perspective it is also the subject of many fairytales, folklore, and legends. One easily recognizable and common childhood story is that of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Here, even the name of the main character, makes reference to her shiny blonde hair and it's aesthetic value. Hair is portrayed as a symbol of strength when in the story of *The Three Little Pigs* the mean and aggressive wolf shouts out, "Little pig, little pig let me come in" and the pig replies in his deep, confident, and brave voice, " No, no not by the hair of my chinny chin-chin!" The pig's beard is used to portray an image of strength and power, surely intended to help ward off the evil and dangerous intruder. In yet another common fairy tale, the beautiful long hair grown by *Rapunzel* helps her to escape the imprisonment and solitude of a lonely tower in a story by the same name as told by the Grimm Brothers (Grimm Brothers, 1985). This story again uses hair as a symbol of strength and power.

In the Walt Disney (1998) story of *Mulan*, a beautiful Chinese daughter pretends to be a son capable of bringing great honor to her family when she ceremoniously cuts off her hair so that she could easily pass as a young man. This paved the way for the gender change which was needed in order to join the military. She leaves behind her hair comb as a token of her love when she sneaks off to war with short, cropped hair. She could now serve in the Imperial Army as her family's representative following an order imposed by the Emperor.

Long ago, Greek women offered their hair to the goddess *Cybele*, in hopes of a happy marriage and to the goddess *Athena* on attaining that happiness. After the birth of a child, those same women spared even more of their locks in an expression of gratitude for the birth of a male child. In the Native American culture, believed that there was a connection between the hair on one's head and the soul. They thought that the hair on a person's head imprisoned the soul, and by scalping an enemy, they would capture the soul. This was an attempt at the prevention they believed which would keep the soul from escaping and later seeking revenge against its captures (Cooper, 1971).

Today, it only takes a brief glimpse at the dozens of magazine racks displayed at checkout stands in many local retailers to see the focus of current trends in hair color and style. Wendy Cooper, (1971) writes, "From the earliest times of which there is any record, hair- its length, texture, and color, growth, and loss has exerted a strange fascination on the human race" (p. 11). The very distribution of our hair, she writes, "and that much of this growth coincides with puberty, has invested it with a powerful sexual significance" (p. 11). Hair can produce the essence of both maturity and strength. Blonde hair on the other hand is more specifically related to issues of innocence and childishness

since many people, both male and female may have had blonde hair in their youth, but then become darker haired as they age. This childishness relation to hair also promotes the assumption then by many people that blondes are inexperienced and as a result may not be as “intellectually” mature as perhaps their non-blonde colleagues. This assumption of naiveté and inexperience further perpetuates the notion of inexperience and lack of sound and creditable knowledge.

It is my intention to show in this original study that identity and image representation is socially constructed mainly from our lived environments and the influence of the popular culture which surrounds us. How we see ourselves and how others see us respectively, is important to the construction of who we become, and what we bring of ourselves into a classroom as both student and teacher.

Personal Reflection

More times than I care to remember I, or my appearance to be more specific, has been the brunt of light-hearted harassment or cunningly orchestrated stereotyping. Yes, on more than one occasion I have been in the presence of the usually male narrated “Dumb Blonde” joke. Combine the gender specific identity of femininity with that of being blonde, a former high school cheerleader, a 1982 contestant in the nationally televised Miss U.S.A. Pageant, and my intelligence has been questioned or blatantly even nullified long before ever having opened my mouth. A strong southern drawl has only added to the question of even the slightest bit of credibility, which my personal accomplishments and acquired level of education might otherwise warrant.

Over the last several years the topic of discrimination by the way of identity stereotyping along with bringing diversity into the classroom has become of particular

interest to me. I have been appalled by the comments and negative connotations commonly spoken, and I would even add, “expected” to be heard in our society. Slurs of negativity about a certain race, occupation, and yes even *hair color* have been some of the groups being helplessly attacked. As I have worked my way through various topics of research on current educational issues, I have continued to observe countless examples of the preconceived expectations of a student’s ability based on physical identity. We have all heard examples of these educational stereotypes such as, “Asians are good in Math” or “Girls don’t score well in Physical Science.” Just the other day I heard a colleague talking about one of her second grade students as she jokingly said, “She is so dingy, she really is a true blonde!” Insensitive comments and the generalization of a student’s academic ability based on hair color are simply not reliable, and absurd! I am truly appalled that these negative comments and generalizations continue to be perpetuated even today, a time when the landscape of our country is so colorfully peppered by various cultures and combinations of ethnic origins.

Usually, it is the sultry and voluptuous image of Marilyn Monroe, which quickly surfaces at even the slightest mention or even hint of the meaning of “blondeness.” The wonder of any measurable correlation between hair color and natural intelligence or the question of whether blondes really do have more fun, are answered by insensitive stereotypical ethnic jokes. In researching the origins of these images, and stereotypical attitudes, I have discovered that popular culture seems to hold most of the responsibility for these various assumptions and how they are permeated throughout numerous areas of our society.

The thorough investigation of popular culture allows a clear view into the window of the world around us. It has become a very powerful way to connect us into the shared world in which we all live. Popular culture has not only become the way we see ourselves, but has also become the way we commonly see others and the world around us. Popular culture has become a mirror of sorts, and our mirrored images are scattered throughout popular culture and dispersed as versions of likeness or otherness in fashion, the media, and current trends.

In my dissertation, I will use qualitative research to share the life's experiences of five women who can easily negate those common negative stereotypes and generalizations that have become so popularized and are so widely held about women with blonde hair. The common assumption is that blondes are "dumb", and lack the same *perception* at least of the intelligence that non-blondes easily exhibit. It will be easy to see their successes in education, and professional accomplishments through the narratives I will provide. This qualitative data will be gathered from many hours of reviewing the personal profiles of each participant, their individual journaling, observations, and recorded interviews. I plan to develop a detailed questionnaire, conduct individual interviews, and then analyze the life experiences of my subjects in order to report my conclusion and findings. These women will each be from different professional backgrounds in order to negate the commonly accepted myth, which is generalized across professional fields and social categorical lines. It is my goal to show that women who have blonde hair, whether natural or colored have no less intellectual capabilities, nor should expect to achieve fewer personal, educational, or professional accomplishments than those of their non-blonde peers. The subjects participating in this research, will all

be of European-American descent thus not to imply any cultural or ethnic bias. Further, this narrative study will expose their lived experiences and report on how each has managed to successfully overcome the implied stereotype discussed here, and the discriminatory slurs as related to the image of the “dumb blonde.”

Through the theoretical framework of narrative inquiry, I will dissect and analyze the stories and life experiences of these subjects who have attended a variety of post secondary southern educational institutions. Currently these women work in five different professional fields and come from various yet mostly middleclass home environments. I will also present the historical foundations of this myth and how it has been perpetuated and became so prominent in our society. In addition, I will show how popular culture has played an integral role and responsibility in the construction of this very common image and how it continues to perpetuate itself throughout our country even today when the education field is flooded by research about discrimination, stereotypical attitudes, and the need to promote tolerance and the understanding of others as we promote the appreciation of diversity among our students.

Statement of Problem

Making generalizations based on physical identity or any other characteristic, while may very well be common in our society, is an unacceptable and unreliable practice. Stereotypical assumptions about someone’s intelligence or predictable academic achievement level are both problems still faced in our educational system today. These assumptions can be seen in the context of tracking students by race, gender, or socio economic level, and labeling, in addition to preconceived behavioral expectations among certain populations of students.

One recent example that there is a public assumption that blondes are dumb or that it is humorous and can even become profitable to make fun of blondes, was seen in the fall of 2005. The popular retail clothing establishment, *Abercrombie & Fitch* was the subject of national attention when they were cited for various discrimination issues as a result of having marketed a series of screen print tee shirts with offensive sexist and derogatory slogans referring to women and specifically blonde women, (The Today Show, November 2005, personally viewed.) A national “girlcott” sponsored by the Allegheny County Girls as Grant Makers program spearheaded the initial criticisms. Protests sprang up at various venues throughout the country with criticisms of the company’s negative images towards women and the promotions of their obvious sexist attitudes. One such tee shirt read, “I had a nightmare: I dreamed I was a Brunette” and “I’m Blonde: so I don’t have to be smart.” These are just a sample of the degrading and stereotypical generalizations screen printed on the tee shirts and then sold in stores across America. Emma Blackmanmathis told a reporter for the KDKA Pittsburgh news, “We were discussing problems in Allegheny county area, and we noticed slogans on tee shirts like brunette violence—so we decided to ‘girlcott’ these products” (KDKA, 2005, p.1). As a result, a countless number of viewers called or wrote in to various media outlets in order to express their distaste of these negative and degrading slogans. Blogs sprang up all over the World Wide Web with comments and disapproval about the insensitivity of this particular corporation. As I began to research this particular incident for the current research at hand, the search engine Google alone supplied me with more than 24,000 links on this controversial subject. Offended by the products, one blonde engineer wrote in to a shared blog journal and expressed her own dissatisfaction. She suggested several

other slogans in retaliation that might be printed on tee shirts in an attempt at retaliation, “Your hair color doesn’t matter: your brain does” and “If you believe in hair color stereotypes, you’re stupid” (Ginmar, 2006). Abercrombie & Fitch eventually pulled the tee shirts from their regular stock merchandise and they are now only available for purchase on the popular auction site *ebay*.

Context of Study

This study will closely examine the lives of five women who consider themselves successful in their own accomplishments, and have been recognized by their professional peers, or business associates as intelligent, and outstanding in their respective fields. Narrative inquiry will be the basis from which my research will be drawn. Hopefully, this study will lend insight as to why given the common public perception and images of the media that blondes are dumb, have no common sense, and are incapable of success, many women still achieve high levels of education, reach various measures of success and exude both confidence and competence, despite the obstacles set forth by this negative perception of their physical identity which resonates so profoundly throughout our society.

Research Questions

Just where did this notion that blondes are dumb ever come from in the first place? Are women with blonde hair less capable of becoming successful in their chosen profession? Is there any truth at all to the preconceived ideas that hair color has anything at all to do with intelligence? What makes some women disregard the constant negative images about blonde hair? For girls who were born blonde, as their hair becomes darker with age, why do many of them choose to dye their hair? For women who are born

brunette or other colors, why do they choose to go blonde? How have women fought back these negative perceptions and moved forward despite their public persona? These are just a few of the questions I intend to answer through this research and inquiry. While these findings may very well be applicable to males, the purpose of this study is to focus on the issues of bloneness and its discrimination as it relates specifically to the female gender.

Significance of Identity

At a quick glance, most would say that one's identity has absolutely nothing to do with education. Most would say that it does not matter, not from the perspective of the teacher, nor that from or of the student. I argue that identity does indeed matter and has significance both from the perspective of the student as well as from the teacher. The recognition of my own membership in mainstream America and lack of "otherness" has taken years of self-dissection. In addition, my white privilege, has taken even longer not only to recognize, but also to accept and openly admit. So then yes, my race, my religious affiliation, my level of education, my birth order, and my duties as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, neighbor, student, teacher, and colleague all collectively make me who I am today. This is significant because I bring this identity with me daily into a classroom where I teach dozens of small impressionable children. Some are like me, and then there are others who are not. Identity; whether that of race, sexual orientation, or nationality, and I propose that of physical appearance and hair color, all bring a sense of individualized chemistry into each and every classroom setting.

Connecting this study to the field of curriculum studies was done so by investigating the relevance of experience and what that experience brings into the

classroom setting. It is my belief that our collective experiences from both in and outside the classroom contribute greatly to our identity. The term *currere* or “the running of the course,” as described by Pinar and Grumet (1976) refers to the ever-changing face of curriculum. This is the curriculum that is created by what I as teacher, and my students along with our collective experiences bring to and take from that same classroom setting each and every day. Mary Aswell Doll (2000) describes this *currere*, as “A moving form, running with experience as it is lived by both researcher and student” (p. xii). This *currere*, which stems from curriculum, existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis is, “The study of educational experience” (Pinar, 2000, p. 400). I propose that blondness as an attribute and characteristic of one’s identity is just another contribution to the ever-flowing *currere* of the educational process and setting.

Generalizations and Stereotypes

The definition of *stereotype* at its most basic term, means, “A fixed impression, exaggerated or preconceived idea about particular social groups” (Pizarro -Eckert, 2005, p. 1). These learned ideals are acquired at a very young age and are usually based solely cultural affiliation or on the physical appearance of the individual. I have discovered that stereotypes are learned from many sources, which include parents, and other family members, teachers, peers, and the media in a multitude of forms. Among the many dangers in relying on stereotypes or other generalizations to guide our thoughts, opinions, or even actions are that these overgeneralizations do not represent all or perhaps even “most” individuals within a specific group. These preconceived ideas become the very basic foundations for prejudice attitudes and blatant discrimination so prevalent in our society today. Stereotyping others will always present

large obstacles in getting to know others for whom they are, versus whom we “think” they might or should be.

Today, the term ‘stereotype’ almost always conjures up a negative image. Certain groups, such as blacks, gays, Hispanics, and even women are subjected to these attitudes usually because of the way the public sees them and the way they see themselves projected in the mass media. This was not the sole intention however, when Walter Lippman, originally coined the term “stereotype”. Dyer (1993) writes that, “Lippman none the less lays out very clearly both the absolute necessity for, and the usefulness of, stereotypes, as well as their limitations and ideological implications” (p.11). Dyer described four functions of the stereotype based on Lippmann’s definition. Stereotypes were useful as an ordering process, a short cut or simplification in the process of drawing conclusions, and a way of referring to the world (Dyer, 1993). Highly charged with feelings and opinions, stereotyping others can reflect our own views of both ourselves, and the world around us, and even more importantly, see the way the world sees us.

These images can, and often are perceived in both positive and negative ways. In addition, positive stereotypes can also lead to less than positive outcomes. Comments of generalizations such as, “Boys are good in math” or “All Latinos dance well” are examples of a positive stereotypical comment, which can lead to a very negative self-image, stress, pressure to conform, ineffective intercultural interactions, and even mental illness (Pizarro-Eckert, 2005). These images can leave a person feeling as though they will never be good enough or that they cannot measure up to the stereotypical standard of perfection. A Latino Who lacks rhythm or coordination would certainly not fit the stereotypical previously mentioned. An individual such as this might feel inadequate

based on societal expectations. While saying that Latinos dance well is a positive comment, not fulfilling this expectation could lead to a negative outcome.

Stereotypes can be studied in several ways. Individual stereotypes can be studied by describing how they are seen today as compared to how they have been seen in the past. Insights and perspectives are found through the research findings in History, Folklore, and Cultural Studies. They are perpetuated by associations in commercials like the handsome Marlboro man from the 1970's who was shown smoking a cigarette, or the physically fit athlete who is shown wearing a particular brand of running shoes. This associative function of the brain is a natural one. The connections are made through schemata, and the repeated associations are even more memorable as they are repeated (Gluckson, 2005). As our society continues to present the negative image that girls and women with blonde hair are less intelligent, the assumption will continue to be perpetuated even if this myth or stereotypical vision lacks any validity.

Purpose of Study

Until I began researching this seemingly abstract concept of bloneness and its many implications, I had no idea that there would be such a vast collection of works dedicated to the subject of hair and more specifically, hair color. It was enlightening to me to be able to identify with so many other women with whom I've never met. Yet, together we share many of the same similarities and perceptions of our own identity based largely on our hair color. I can remember to this very day, distinctly the moment I decided to go from a natural darker dishwater blonde, to one that chose to "highlight" my hair as it began to lose the natural sun-streaked shine during the winter months of my later teenage years. Amazingly, as I read the stories of other women choosing to go

blonde or wanting to become even blonder than they were by nature, many of the reasons were similar.

The purpose of this study is to examine the lives of five women who have easily negated the commonly portrayed vision that women with blonde hair are less intelligent and as a result, less likely to become successful than non-blondes. It is my goal to use this study to raise social conscience about this area of discrimination. I want to investigate the influences if any that popular culture played in their image construction and find out what were the negative and or positive motivating factors which helped lead the way to their successes.

This study is significant to educators in general and the field of Curriculum Studies specifically because it addresses the concern of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory preconceived ideal based on the unreliable use of stereotypes and generalizations as they refer to identity both in and outside the classroom and based on issues of identity construction. Practicing educators today should concern themselves and others with these generalizations and negative images. I believe that it is our personal identity and image representation that becomes part of the whole we as educators and students each bring to the table of the great and ever changing conversation of education.

Summary

Educational stereotypes and generalizations often limit without acknowledgement an educator's expectations of a student's future success. The goal of this narrative inquiry will be to unveil the contributions of popular culture in the construction of the preconceived ideas and the image of the dumb blonde. Negating this negative image by sharing the lived experiences of my participants will hopefully make educators aware of how prevalent these images are in our society and prohibit its readers from making the same mistake and generalizing their own students while innocently lowering the expectations of certain students based on their physical identity.

See in Chapter II the relevant professional literature I reviewed for the background of this study. Chapter III includes the method of inquiry used for my research and bases for using such inquiry to reveal the lived experiences of these successful women who one day sat at the heels of influential teachers who helped to shape their identity. Data from the study and cross-case analysis will be contained within Chapter IV, and finally the discussion of findings, its limitations, and implications of the study are found in Chapter V along with the summary. References and appendices conclude this work.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As I sought to answer to my initial research questions, I read a plethora of works from various areas of literature ranging from the historical accounts of the hair color industry to the responsibilities of popular culture and how it has become an important part in the construction of one's personal identity development. Other curriculum theorists have written extensively on the subject of identity in general, and gender specifically. I even found literature available in the field of curriculum studies concentrating on sexual orientation fixed within the larger subject of gender identity from theorists such as Peter Taubman. Other curriculum theorists like Madeline Grumet and Linda Miller write extensively about gender issues, but I found no prior tie to hair color from theorists and the discriminations and challenges that may bring to the life of a woman who lives her life as a blonde. My present work can be easily aligned with studies such as these which focus on gender equality, but the focus of hair color will be a new addition to this greater category.

Contained within my review of literature, I have included works offering explanations of identity development, a thorough and very comprehensive record and chronology of the phenomenon of hair, relevance to hair color across history, and the responsibility of popular culture in the development of the common negative images perpetuated among our society. I also provide examples of how these identities are perpetuated throughout our society as they are presented in relation to women with blonde hair and the negative stereotypical generalizations and discriminatory remarks presented in various forms throughout the media.

The Construction of Identity

The term *identity* is a complex one inferring a multitude of meanings. Identity is known presently more as that of a “dilemma” of sorts rather than a stable product of experience. It often addresses or refers to race, class, and sexual differences. Our identities are complex and multi layered, “We are fragmented, conflicted, multiple, and protean, and see ourselves as variable and relativist in our actions and beliefs” writes Steven Weiland (2003, p.201). Agreeing with Weiland in terms of identities assuming diverse and varied forms, I too believe that most women identify themselves in a plural rather than a singular sense. They often characterize themselves by their gender, cultural affiliation, their profession, their role as a family member, and usually do so in a collective sense. As I have discussed this concept with numerous women, most of them have expressed this very same ideal and verbalize with ease that they are the sum of their many parts and that they identify themselves by the many hats that they wear.

The foregoing review of literature in the area of image and identity construction, attests to the importance of the interwoven thread of gender, experience as has been mentioned in prior sections of this study, and the influence of the many forms of media representation, a byproduct of popular culture. Looking into each of these areas as they relate specifically to females who have blonde hair will bring together a total picture of how identity is constructed and observed through their experiences.

Linda Martin Alcoff (2000) writes that, “Identities are real and they have real effects and correlate with real experiences” (p. 334). She continues with an explanation that identities are politically and epistemically significant because of their correlation with experience. It is this experience that is the basis of knowledge both in and outside of

the classroom. Students, like their teachers bring with them into the classroom each day their own prior experiences and it is from that perspective and those experiences that they see the world around them both in and outside the classroom.

Experience offers a view into our own environment and into the world which surrounds us. Barbara Thayer-Bacon (1998) uses philosophical insights to explain how the way we view ourselves, also helps us view and understand the world around us. As we trust the others of which we share a personal relationship, because we are social beings we can learn from them. She writes, “We begin to develop a sense of self and eventually learn to think more autonomously when we can question our beliefs” (p. 58). This self becomes our self-image and these images become part of our own identity. It is through our own reflections of the self and the community where we are that our self and these images begin to emerge.

John Fiske, (1993) discusses a “bottom-down” type as opposed to a “top-down” sense of identity in his book *Power Plays: Power Works*. In the “top-down” aspect he proposes that *individuation* is an effect of power and knowledge. This is the process that separates an individual from others and that the end result is what he calls, “stationing-the placing of the individuated person in the position required by social order” (p.67). In contrast, he proposes that the “bottom-down” view refers to an aspect of one’s own sense of identity. He writes, “Bottom-up individuality is the product of a person’s history, family ties and continuities, of relationships with friends of community groups, of choices in leisure-time activities.” (p.67). These bottom-up identities, may be difficult to come by but this power reaches into various relationships and leisure activities. “Identity,” he continues, “Is a crucial pressure point in the consciousness of people living

under a power-bloc” (p.68). The difference then of power held by others is the difference we use to measure our own identity. Some people may liken this concept to the old saying, “Keeping up with the Jones’.”

Handel K. Wright is another theorist who supports this aspect of the multiplicity of identity and how it is tied to prior experience. He writes, “Experience, identity, representation, and autobiography for me are not given, fixed notions but rather constructed, procedural, multiple, overlapping, contradictory, and performative” (Wright, 2003, p. 809). This procedural and performative aspect spoken of by Wright is akin to the “power block aspect of identity mentioned by Fiske. These ideas are related to me by way of identity having a socially constructed nature of individuals trying to “fit in” whether it be at work, school, or church. This fitting in or living up to or conforming if you will is part of wanted to be accepted. In further agreement with this idea is Gray (2003) where she writes, “The relationship between identity and experience can be understood as a discursive site of articulation upon which and through which subjectivities and identities are shaped and constructed” (p.25).

The search for identity is what Martin and Mohanty (1986) describes as a “Rewriting of the self in relation to shifting interpersonal and political concepts” (p. 206). The balancing of these various concepts are difficult but continue to add to the concept of the multiplicity of the concept identity I am presenting here. Again, I propose that this in relation to where we fit in or where we think we fit in or measure up against others in society.

Gender

Gender is only one single aspect of this multi-layered aspect of identity development. Some research indicates that gender identity is fixed early in childhood between the ages of approximately two to four years. To support this theory, Madeline Grumet (1988) writes that, "Gender identity has evolved by the age of three," (p. 12). Later, she confirms and supports my own ideas that our *gender identity* is only a part of the whole of this multiplicity of our identity. I believe that the total of who we are and who we become as we grow and evolve. She states, "The development of gender is not an isolated process but intrinsically related to and contingent upon the processes of becoming a knowing subject in a particular set of relations filled with desire, need, and love" (p. 64).

From an historical perspective, it was not until the 1950's and 60's that psychologists even began studying the concept of gender development in young children. This interest first emerged partly in an effort to understand the possible origins of homosexuality, which at that time was still considered most a type of mental disorder. The term *gender identity* was created by the psychoanalyst Robert Stoller and presented to the Psychoanalytic Congress in 1963. Today, gender identity moves beyond behavior and attitudes and encapsulates a sense of one's own self. Filene (1998) writes, "It connotes a process of developing oneself in interaction with others and in reference to culturally defined expectations and social institutions (p. xiii). This development he further explains, "Is a dynamic process that takes place over time." One's *gender role* is the manner in which social expression is based on the kinds of actions or activities

society determines to be appropriate for individuals possessing specific external genitalia (Wikipedia, 2006).

On another hand, one's specific *sexual* identity depends greatly upon the acknowledgement by the interpreter. Madeline Grumet (1988) writes, "If sexism refers to the response of society to a particular sexual identity, gender refers to that sexual identity as it is experienced, acknowledged, and owned by the individual" (p. 45). It is the experience of living in our society, the active participation in our community as a heterosexual female that I am most concerned with as it relates to gender in the study I present here. This aspect of gender identity is important to the image and identity construction as it relates to this study, because it is the collection of societal experiences and expectations, or the imposed social constructions and images that greatly influence how we see ourselves and how others view us. It is the heterosexual blonde female's experiences that are shared here in order to dismiss those common negative stereotypes.

Grumet, who has written about concerns of gender for the last twenty years, is interested in how women's experiences influence their teaching practices. We cannot minimize these experiences and the multiplicity of our identities as we enter the classroom. She writes, " My life is fragmented, between the experiences of domesticity and the experience of teaching, between being with one's own children and being with the children of others, between being the child of one's own mother and the teacher of another mother's child, between feeling and form, family, and colleges" (Grumet, 1988, p. xv).

Concerns with gender are not new to the processes and organization of formal education. Questioning the value of coeducation, known as mixed schooling during the

first half of the nineteenth century or the promotions of gender segregated campuses and even gender specific homogenous classrooms are among the most heated discussions with both opposing ideals capable of supporting their argument with vast amounts of documentation and research.

Today, the number of schools making available single sex educational programs has increased nearly twenty percent from 2001 to 2004, (Sax, 2005).

We must also acknowledge the initial infusion of females into the classroom, the transfer from male to female in terms of instructor. It was not until the early 1800's that males began to render the predominate role as educator to unmarried young women. During the time of rapid industrialization and urbanization, women more so than men took over the classroom and brought with them their sense of femininity and sense of gender into schools. It is important to note that this became an economic advantageous move because the cost of employment for female teachers was far less than that of male ones, (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman, 1998). Even others propose that these same females were perhaps hoping to escape the responsibilities of caring for or looking after younger siblings in the home. Employment then as a teacher during the antebellum era became more common, (Grumet, 1988). This adventure often led to opportunities of travel and exposure to new places and people.

Understanding that gender permeates the various ways of knowing, must also be considered at the very onset and broach of this topic. In *Understanding Curriculum as Gender Text* (1995), Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman write, "Schooling and the discourses on schooling have been informed historically by the meanings we have given to the division of human beings into male and female" (p.359). This work gives an

historical and thorough account of discourse on gender and the emergence of feminist and gender based research. In other writings in this same work, the exemplary work of theorists such as Madeline Grumet as mentioned before, along with Janet Miller, Bill Pinar, Peter Taubman, among others is cited to offer an account of the explosion of feminist and gender analyses of curriculum that first began in the 1970's. Overlapping theories of gender analyses, with autobiography, experience, and curriculum scholarship makes the integration of these discourses a continuous process. Gender role and sexual identity is only a portion of this multi-layered construction of image identity.

Gender identified activities can further be analyzed by taking a closer look into cheerleading. Originally a male dominated sport, women began entering the sport as early as the 1920's and by the 1950's cheerleading became regarded as primarily female. This transition though did not come without resistance. Adams and Bettis (2003) write, "As girls and women joined cheerleading squads, concern was expressed that they were inherently incapable of performing the difficult acrobatic stunts that had been the mainstay of cheerleading for the previous decades" (p.28). During this same time the percentage of women attending undergraduate programs had also increased to about 47%. Women were gaining ground in the public eye partly because so many men were away at war. The Miss America pageant had begun, and women were commonly seen in advertising images promoting glamour and beauty. But as these same men returned from war, many high schools and colleges began to ban girls and women on the discrediting the feminine gender's ability to control the crowd, lack the ability to lead cheers, and their voices are too "shrill" (Adams & Bettis 2003, p.30).

In her article, co-authored with Janet Miller, *Women and education: In what ways does gender affect the educational process?* (1992) JoAnne Pagano discusses the question of relevance to gender in the educational process. While gender ought not matter, we can see that indeed it does when standardized tests are analyzed and desegregated in terms of gender in addition to race, and many other correlations. She writes,

We know that sex and other differences correlate in various ways with school performance and has been well documented, and the conclusion that our teaching ought to acknowledge that difference seems unimpeachable to me. Academic achievement is more likely when the mode of teaching connects with the student's cognitive orientation is desirable if our goal is universal educational achievement (p.143).

Having concerns with gender identity and feminist analysis for the last thirty years, Janet Miller attests to the multi-layered aspects of gender and researches the concerns of autobiography as it relates to education. Through her work, she is interested in women's autobiography based on their prior experience and questions being and becoming a woman and how that relates to the construction of identity. In the article previously mentioned, co-written with Pagano, Miller writes, "As we who educate now attempt to understand curriculum as representation of particular historical, social, economic, and political intersections in individual lives, we also view those interactions as mediated by multiple constructions of gender, race, and class" (1995, p. 156). I agree with Miller that these important concepts are not easily separated and that this multifaceted and multi-layered concept of gender identity is not so easy to define.

Later in *Sounds of Silence Breaking* (2005) Miller also attests to the fact that other female teachers and researchers continuously concern themselves with measuring up in the male dominated field of educational administration. She writes, “Beth clarified her expectations to ‘over perform’ in order to ensure that she could ‘play’ in the male-dominated world of educational administration” (p.142-143). She questions what it means to be a “woman academic”, or a “woman administrator.” These identities she contends are still, “raced, classed, aged, ability, sexual orientated, and gendered” but questions what new possibilities might be created out of their collaborative research for a more just educational world (p.143).

The multiplicity of our experience and cognitive processes would seem an appropriate step toward negating these measurable differences. In addition, experiences of education or any other source should be of the human kind rather than those of specific learning styles or teaching styles must less specific to gender. If for instance both men and women acquire abstract and principled thinking, relational, and contextual then neither category of thinking should be regarded more male than female. Educators of today who are proactive in minimalizing generalizations should make it their business to target the learner rather than segregated groups of learners.

Quite the contrast to Pagano and Miller’s way of thinking is that of Leonard Sax. He on the on the other hand regards the differences between the male and female brain structure and function as undeniable and worthy of consideration by both parents and teachers. In his book *Why Gender Matters: What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about the Emerging Science of Sex Difference* (2005), Sax discusses the emerging research available on the scientific difference between the male and female

gender. He completely discounts any ideas or theories that gender differences are nothing more than constructions of socialization. To defend his theory he cites a study conducted at Concordia University, which involved seventy-seven one and a half year old toddlers of both boys and girls. The research found that the children were seemingly unaware of which gender they belonged to. When offered gender specific toys such as dolls and trucks, the girls were more apt to play with trucks than boys were apt to play with dolls. In addition, the same study found that boys more often chose trucks. Sax writes, “Kids this age just cannot reliably assign themselves to the correct gender, and they score only slightly above chance in assigning other kids to correct gender” (2005, p. 27).

Throughout this book, Sax references numerous studies to support his theory including several on play behavior of various other mammals. Gender differences were evident in each. Later he writes, “Girls and boys behave differently because their brains are wired differently” (p.28).

Cynthia Gannett (1992) references gender difference in terms of language uses and literary composition. She discusses the “linguistic and material realities” (p.50) of men and women. It is the masculine and feminine, public-private, and other socially constructed domains that she is most concerned. Throughout this work she traces her own as well as her students’ writings in relation to the various academic understandings from the prospective of language, knowledge, and gender. A major concern for her is that teacher’s writings are often not respected in the manner that is justified simply because so much of education and educators are viewed as feminine and therefore not worthy of mainstream respect.

To further support the idea that gender identity originates from the anatomy of the brain, Aranoff and Bell (2004) write, “There is increasing evidence to suggest that the brain is a sexual organ, that brain sex [i.e., the sex of the brain] is paramount in determining human gender identity” (p.12). This can be further documented with studies about the hemispheric differences. Dating back to the early sixties, Herert Lansdell began reporting on the gender differences as related to the brain. Men more so than women have demonstrated again and again that their left hemisphere of the brain is responsible for language while the right side is specialized for spatial relations. This asymmetry is not as evident in women. Stroke patients provided even more evidence to support this theory. Leonard Sax writes, “Male brains and female brains are organized differently, with functions more compartmentalized in male brains and more globally distributed in female brains” (Sax, 2005, p.12). It is important to state here that while there may very well be evidence to support the idea that the male and female brains are different, the students themselves regardless of gender, orientation, hair color or ethnic affiliation, should not be treated any different from one another. Girls and boys should have equal opportunity in learning activities and organized sports activities.

The Foundation of Curriculum Studies

The foundation of the curriculum studies field arose from the ongoing struggle and discontentment rooted in the curriculum field. The continued conflicts between opposing camps of ideology of the classical humanists, child centered leaders, social advocates, and the social reconstructionists. Each held their own dominance during their time of prosperous growth, but by 1969 a change was in need (McNeil, 1990).

A publication in 1969 by Joseph J. Schwab entitled *“The Practical: A Language for Curriculum”* initiated the next ten years of arguments between opposing interest groups. In this publication Schwab made reference that the field of curriculum was “dead” and made several suggestions for improvement. Ideas for improvement included a need for new journals, a recommendation to move the field from theoretical to practical and eclectic, and stated a need for teacher education programs to provide deliberate instruction for exercising the practical arts (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995).

This opened the field up for new insights and improvements. Theorists pushing for this change such as James Macdonald offered that it was the relationship between society and the individual that actually defined individuals. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995) wrote that, “He called for a new image which could shape schools in general and the curriculum in particular” and later advocated for a “person-orientated curriculum” (p 178 &179). Dwayne Huebner was also advocating a “reconceptualization” of the field because of dissatisfaction with his own education. He was interested in theology and philosophy and saw a need to bring subjects of this nature to the field of curriculum. Art could facilitate curriculum theory and design as suggested by Eliot Eisner. Huebner (1966) writes that, “Educational environment and activity in the schools are symbolic of what man is today and what he wants to be tomorrow. The design of these symbols is a great art. The study of curriculum should be a preparation for this artistry” (p.112).

Another critic of the current state was Herbert Kliebard. He became more and more verbal about his discontentment of the traditional field of curriculum and noted the lack of a continued dialogue between fellow practioners. He writes,

Generally speaking, foremost scholars in the fields of study continually engage in a kind of dialogue with their ancestral counterparts rejecting, revising, or refining the early formulations and concepts. No such cumulative approach to the content of the curriculum field has yet emerged (Kleibard, 1970, p.41).

The field was now open for new ideas and inquiry. Macdonald, Eisner, Kleibard along with many others opened up questions that could now be addressed in a more open ended less scientific way. Pinar (2000) writes that,

“The reconceptualists concern themselves with the internal and existential experience of the world. They tend to study matters of temporality, transcendence, conscious, and politics” (p.xiv). The attempt was now being made to understand the very nature and the process of the experience of education. Bridging together thoughts and ideals from various perspectives phenomenological, post modernism, feminists’ theory, racial, aesthetic, literary, theological, popular culture, and psychoanalytical discourses offers a multitude of voices from which to understand the curriculum field. Curriculum studies became a fresh way to view a traditional concept. These theorists began to draw attention to the political and moral aspects of curriculum making (McNeil, 1990). By 1973 the field of Curriculum Studies was well under way offering new insights and an open conversation of inquiry. The reconceptualization Pinar explains, “Will attempt to become a synthesis of contemporary social science and humanities” (Pinar, 2000 p.xv).

Cultural Studies and Popular Culture

A careful examination into the area of cultural studies will offer several theories related to the various possibilities of why women with blonde hair have been stereotyped as a “dumb blonde.” Our first consideration must be to the uncertain definition of what is

implied by the term cultural studies. In *Popular Culture* (2005) Weaver contends that it is a term, which “has numerous meanings” (p.19). Later he defines the term cultural studies to be a, “Multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of all dimensions of culture” which include the realms from the, “traditional notions to popular culture.” He adds, “The field of cultural studies does not assume that traditional culture is inherently superior to popular culture” (p.20). Agreeing with Weaver, I also propose that cultural studies, is actually a way to question the past and present organization and the construction of power from a variety of individual perspectives.

Another theorist, Lawrence Grossberg (1997) offers the following for his definition. “Cultural studies” he writes, “Is a different practice of theorizing, a different way of politicizing theory and theorizing politics” (p.4). I offer that these very questions are precisely what present a problematic concern of the cultural studies field. It may actually threaten and could eventually permeate the very strength of the status quo weakening the core of mainstream America. Later he writes, that the field, “is constantly negotiating its identity and repositioning itself within changing intellectual and political maps” (p.238). We as educators must keep an open mind and be willing reposition of instructional practices along with the needs of our changing student body.

The geographic origins of cultural studies are arguably uncertain and may have several possibilities. The Frankfurt School, in Germany is cited for a group of scholars and intellectuals of various fields such as sociology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, music, and history who were interested in the general interpretation of society discussing ideas ranging from economics to culture. The term “critical theory” is credited to these scholars who considered themselves, “social and political critics.” Eventually, some of these

scholars wound up in the United States, while some went to England or France. The most “famous” and “influential” tradition in popular cultural studies is often noted to be The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England. This school is often credited for coining the term “cultural studies” however there are many scholars such as Handel Wright who blatantly dismiss this assumption. He contends that the term came from Limuru, Kenya. The scholars from the United States are said to describe themselves as, “literary scholars and critics who happen to focus some of their attention on popular culture” (Weaver, 2005, p.36).

The culture of the “masses,” a term Weaver (2005) uses to describe, “The people, who did not understand or share the sanctioned values” of the same social codes held by those of the Cultured elite, or those with power began to possess their own social codes. The difference he writes is, “These codes did not have the same power and weight in society to persuade or influence opinion” (p.1). From an historical point of view this was the case long ago, but as times began to change, so would the landscape of culture and what was considered culture would begin to metamorphosis too.

Eventually, *popular culture* or the culture of those referred to as “the masses” began to replace the traditional ideals of Culture by the mid nineteen-fifties. This became more prevalent because of the major forms of mass communication such as film, radio, and music was much more readily available to the common public. No longer did one have to travel all the way to New York to see actors on Broadway. Acting and theater was seen or heard on television or radio. Time off from work and an expensive ticket to the Opera was no longer necessary; music could now be heard on an inexpensive transistor radio. The commonality of these forms of culture became the norm and not the

exception. This was the beginning of what has now become a very influential aspect of our society today.

Ideas stemming from the initial work done by the Frankfurt School in Germany and the Birmingham Center in England, offer the theoretical approaches to popular culture and cultural studies that can be broadly categorized into two general approaches. The first of those categories is the textual focus where researchers use a variety of theories to analyze the content and form from various examples of films, television, books, and music.

This theorizing then must also be understood through multiple view points and multiple perspectives. Both men and women alike must understand by their own personal viewpoints, but also by the viewpoints of others. These gender ideologies and representations of their own identity are constructed and produced by the consumption of popular culture, (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman, 1995).

Another approach is the consumption focus, often called the ethnographical approach, which asks the audience to articulate the meanings and messages they personally extract from movies, or songs, and stories (Earle, 1999). These ethnographers then gather their data through written responses, interviewing, participant observation, and focus groups. The audience ethnography offers a better explanation and allows for better understanding of how people appropriate different media products. Personal interpretation then, offers a very individualized meaning of culture. Having these two categories in mind, I offer my own ideas in the upcoming pages as to how this all plays into the construction of the image of the dumb blonde and how women who are blonde view themselves and why this is relevant to classroom instruction.

One idea investigated is that popular culture offers a sense of commonality as a result of the shared experience of society presented via the media. It is the media in its various forms, which presents us with the pictures, sounds, and other various tapestries, and as a result these images begin to be ingrained in our every day psyches. Kellner (1995) writes that, “Popular culture is presented in society as, images, sounds, and spectacles that help produce the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behavior, and providing materials out of which people forged their very identities” (p.1).

This cultural text becomes a cumulative text where the identities of both young and old are constructed. We see ourselves in the media as stereotypical images are presented in movies, print ads, and even in music. Manufactures are masters at using appealing images to make the consumer want to purchase their products. Daspit and Weaver (2000) further state the powerful entity of popular culture. They write, “ If students, along with teachers, and administrators, are being constructed by popular culture texts then their identities are not only shifting but the meaning of these texts constantly shift also as they read them” (p. xv). The multidisciplinary aspect of popular culture and the multi-layered aspect of identity cause this shifting without much effort.

Our parents or guardians then are no longer our main source of influence. Popular culture’s influence is so permeated into our society and powerful that it is almost impossible to escape. Provenzo and Kincheloe (1995) discuss the role of the media in terms of television, film, recorded music, comic books, and video games. Collectively, they play a “major role” in shaping contemporary childhood experiences. Later they continue with, “They shape the values and beliefs of children as well as providing them

with critically important cognitive interpretive models for understanding the world” (Provenzo & Kincheloe, 1995, p.217). Being bombarded by the many movies, and other depictions of intellectually deficient females with blonde hair, specifically becomes an expectation in our society.

Patrick Slattery (1999) further supports this notion of popular culture consumption. He writes that, “Popular culture must be understood from multiple perspectives.” He continues with the premise that, “There is an eclectic and fluid movement within diverse sites of cultural experiences.”(p.204). As we gain further insights into this contextuality, we are able to see various viewpoints in a new light. The awareness of this social context affects the way we see the world through our own relationships with others and thus becomes a reflection of the way we see ourselves. This is the mirrored image of society. The concerns of the influence of popular culture are not new.

The rise and popularity of the motion picture business today is further evidence of the sheer capability Hollywood holds in forming attitudes, styles, and even identities of those who watch them. In his book, *Breaking Into The Movies* Henry Giroux writes about this very concept There he differentiates the motion picture industry from other consumer items by pointing out how the images and ideals produced in the industry shape both individual and national identities. He writes,

The potency and power of the movie industry can be seen in its powerful influence upon the popular imagination and public consciousness. Unlike ordinary consumer items, film produces images, ideas, and ideologies that shape both individual and national identities. The power of its reach and extent of its commodification can be

seen as film references are used to sell tee shirts, cups, posters, bumper stickers, and a variety of kitsch” (Giroux, 2002, p. 6).

Each summer, just like clockwork the summer movie season will include several films targeted towards the childhood audience. I believe it no coincidence that those films will be carried forward in the memories of many children because of the wide variety of consumer products made available to purchase highlight the main characters of those films. When a Disney or Pixar film is released the school year will surely begin with many students sporting a new lunch box adorned with picture from the summer’s blockbuster hit. Likewise, being bombarded by the many movies and other depictions such as tee shirts of intelligence lacking females with blonde hair becomes then an expectation by many in our society.

Angela McRobbie (2005) discusses the very notion and the power of the film industry in her book, *The Uses of Cultural Studies* she writes, “The cultural theorist encounters films, books, pieces of music and these, according to the use made of them and the degree of attention given to them, extend his or her existing understanding so that without these forms theory would not exist in quite the way it does” (p.115). This is evident she explains with an example from the film *Touch of Evil* starring Orson Welles. In referring to the plot development and the presentation of a racial stereotype, the movie she continues, “Also contributes to its (racial stereotype), further development, but after a point film might itself be superseded, or even discarded, as it is no longer the attention (p.115). It is the actual **cultural theory** she proposes that helps us to understand aspects of the world more profoundly. The cultural theory of film making, view, or understanding

move in and out of classroom settings, or general water cooler conversations, as well as political groups or small grass roots efforts.

Another idea and concern of the influence that popular culture has on society is that women in general, are still being marginalized at least to some degree. Perhaps some women actually like to appear helpless and frail and that this bubbly presentation of all boobs and butt, wrapped up in the “blonde bow” is the way they choose to construct their own identities. While this may be the result of a lack in self-confidence or maybe these women believe what they have been told, either by verbatim language or implied, these attitudes prove to be problematic for blondes who are well accomplished and confident about their own abilities. Unfortunately, the world around them, the multi-media; then becomes their personal mirror and often projects a less than positive image. This stereotypical image of the dumb blonde and the woman whose beauty is worth more and more powerful than her intelligence is over used in advertising, fashion, and the modern cinema and consequently many times becomes a hindrance to an otherwise positive self-image. These are the images so prevalent in our society that causes me great concern and have the potential to cause adverse development in a positive self image.

Historical Foundation of Blondenness

While research has traced the concept of blondness as far back as Aphrodite the Greek goddess, and her counterpart, Venus to the Romans, the image of the “dumb blonde” as we know it today, originated as far back as 1868, but really exploded as recently as the mid twentieth century as America’s military veterans began returning from World War II. The rise in popularity for the lighter haired woman is considered the, “Golden Era of the Blonde” as described in the book written by Barnaby Conrad III titled

The Blonde (1999). There, he wrote that it was the decades between World War I and the Vietnam War during which power blondes such as Jean Harlow and Marilyn Monroe sent out the message that blonde was the most noticed and most desired hair color to have. Conrad said, “It meant something special- sometimes good, sometimes naughty- to be blonde” (p. 14). The public appeal of fair- haired women began to rise and has continued to be admired and desired by both men and women ever since.

While only about one in twenty American adults is naturally blonde today, walking down any street would cause you to question this statistic, because roughly one in three adult, white women choose to dye, color, frost, or highlight their hair. Among the many reasons they choose to lighten their hair is that people associate blonde hair with youth. It has over time, begun to be associated with other characteristics such as femininity, sex appeal, innocence, and beauty. In addition, many believe that the lighter the hair the less noticeable age lines are around the eyes. Another very common association is that blondes, especially women, have less common sense and far less intelligence than that of our darker haired counterpart. Women often feel discredited in the work environment or are often not taken seriously based solely on the style, color, or cut of their hair. It is also not uncommon for a woman with blonde hair to be passed over for a promotion. As suggested by John Molloy in his 1996 book *New Women’s Dress for Success*, “Women must avoid styles that are too cute, too sexy, too young, too severe, too dated, or too disheveled” (p. 193). Later, he continues that while blondes may have more fun, but that brunettes are more successful and usually taken more seriously in a professional setting than their peers who are blonde.

The “roots” of this tale is well grounded in the fertile soil of Hollywood, California. It was there that the masterminds of seemingly brilliant Hollywood executives who knew how to cash in on something our population was willing to pay for. They created the various images and contributed to the national popularity of the images that are now so ingrained in our psyche. These beautiful, popular culture icons can be held at least partially responsible for the lack of, or question of, any intellectual credibility women today are subjected to, based solely on their hair color. How they became popularized, was the result of clever advertising moguls and the rise in popularity of both the motion picture business and in home television. Adding print magazines to this list will also play an integral role in facilitating these images.

One of the first images of this blonde, helpless, not so smart woman can be traced back to 1868 when the British vaudevillian Lydia Thompson’s burlesque blondes caught the eyes of American men. This was the initial connection between blonde hair, innocent spirits, and passionate bodies (Weitz, 2004). Later between 1910 and the early 1920’s, we were introduced to Mary Pickford who was known as “America’s Sweetheart.” Born in 1893, she was working as an actress by age five and supporting her entire family by age eight. Referred to as “The little girl with golden curls” she was not only an actress, but she was also the first female star to own her own corporation. She along with Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith were partners to Douglas Fairbanks and founded United Artist.

Fast-forward over a half a century and we come to Marlene Dietrich, formerly from Germany. She came to the Hollywood film industry in 1930. Here, the combined environment of popular entertainment and racial politics were a repetitive presence from

the Nazi Germany she left behind (Pitman, 2003). Consistent with common Hollywood production and audience expectations, the long legged blonde women became the precedence for popular screen stars. Dietrich was among many famous superstars of the time, which included Lana Turner, Ginger Rogers, Jean Harlow, and Mae West. These women were usually depicted as being openly sexual beings and as a result the connotation of blonde hair began to become associated with sex appeal. The wartime pin up Betty Grable, who at the time had her own legs insured for a million dollars was also admired because of her voluptuous figure and genuine, wholesome smile.

This famous pin-up showing Grable looking back over her shoulder, sold more than twenty-thousand copies each week to military servicemen who took the poster along with them regardless of their destination for deployment. She was their idealized dream of a woman, beautiful, and tall, had clean-cut blonde hair, and was loyal to the American man she wished to cheer on during the war. To her credit, she raised over “\$40,000 in wartime donations for a single pair of her nylon stockings” (Pitman, p. 217). Betty Grable ruled the Twentieth Century-Fox film industry with blockbuster movies of the time such as *Pin Up Girl*, *Coney Island*, and *Song of the Islands*. The 1949 musical version of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, gave its star Carol Channing the sense that she didn’t have to even say a word to get men’s attention during that time, all she had to do is be blonde she is reported to having told *Good Housekeeping* in an interview dated 1955 (Pitman, 2003). Other film titles such as, *Blonde Crazy* and *Blonde trouble* starring the obviously dyed blonde starlets continued to add to the notion that blatantly and openly dyeing ones hair presented themselves as somewhat risqué.

Born Norma Jean Mortensen, it was the voluptuous, red lipped, big bosomed even cartoonish image of Marilyn Monroe that started the whole idea that the intelligence of beautiful blonde women should be questioned. Her platinum blonde hair and whispery voice was the creation of Emiline Snively the head of the Blue Book modeling agency in California. Monroe's purpose I have found was to lighten up the postwar 1950's by this made for male voyeuristic character constructed of hair dye, red lipstick, and a curvacious figure. Cutting off about a quarter of an inch from one of her heels made the little wiggle in Marilyn's walk. Pitman (2003) writes, "She was also advised to cut a quarter of an inch off one heel to create the wiggle" (p.223). Her whispery voice and innocent sounding giggle made her every man's dream.

During the 1950's and 60's one Hollywood tycoon made his living out of torturing blondes. Alfred Hitchcock almost always chose tall, slim, and elegant blonde stars for his films. Their delicate, fine bones and subdued sexuality all had a very ladylike character. Madeline Carroll, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Janet Leigh, Tippi Hedren, and Kim Novak all presented themselves as polished refinement. Usually clad in velvet attire and dripping in pearls, they projected a classy vulnerable image. This was quite different than the sex kitten creation of the late 40's and 50's. Many shots from various films show the concentration of the camera fixated on their blonde hair. He featured these women as beautiful and powerful yet later in the film they would always face some sort of disaster. "He presented beautiful blonde women as ruling goddesses whose triumphs eventually turn them into victims to be tortured and violated" (Pitman, p.231). These were contradictory images of strong and weak simultaneously with beauty and bloneness as a constant.

Coloring one's hair began to become more acceptable by the 1940's. The commonality of blonde women being front and center on the silver screen, presented this hair color as fashionable and appealing to women. Popular culture was obviously encroaching suburbia. Housewives began to experiment with the new "do it your-self" products available for in home use. They found that they could change their identity or at least the perception of their identity by changing their hair color. Before now, hair dyeing was at best unpredictable, short lasting, and even dangerous. In order to achieve a color change a visit to the salon had been previously required and the expense made it unlikely that the unemployed woman's budget could easily support regular maintenance visits. Many times women would use poisonous lead or even lye which burned the skin and could even make one loose her hair. In 1956, Clairol brought out a new line of hair color products, which allowed the consumer to shampoo and color their own hair at the same time. Coily changing the semantics from dye to rinse or tint made the idea of coloring one's hair even more palatable for those who would otherwise be hesitant. Because hair-coloring products were now more reasonably priced and easy to use, products like those by Clairol were now available at local drugstores. Now, more women would gain the freedom to color their hair without the risk to their health or perhaps even decline in their social standing, (Weitz, 2004). As a result, getting back the color of hair a young lady had before puberty was sought. Weitz writes, "For women whose hair had lost its childhood bloneness now had little to regret" (p.19). This rise in hair dyeing also marked an increase in the valuing of youth. These simple products were created to wash the gray out from a middle-aged woman's hair, make her feel vibrant and youthful again. They could just as easily become a striking blonde. This participation in drugstore consumerism not

only boosted the sales of certain products, but; gave a boost to the economy as well. For women who could not afford a monthly visit to the salon, suddenly felt as though she at least appeared to be economically advantaged enough to do so. Sumana Kasturi, (2002) explains the results of this “hegemonic pedagogy of consumption” (p.50). She writes, “Personal identity, place in society, and even self worth are commoditized, with consumption and commodities standing as symbols of this identity.” I propose that the luxury of having one’s hair dyed if that be their choice is just such an example whether it is a “do it yourself” home job, or it is professionally done by what salons now call a “Color Specialist.”

Several Clairol advertising campaigns developed by Shirley Polykoff can be credited with a shift to this attitude change. She herself was the dark-haired daughter of poor, immigrant Jewish parents who chose to dye her own hair blonde. It was her choice to dye her hair not to hide her heritage, but to express her desire to achieve the American dream. This dream, and the interpretation of its meaning was described by Weitz (2004) “Was that you could acquire all the accoutrements of the established affluent class, which included a certain breeding and a certain kind of look. The idea that she proposed was that, “You should be whatever you want to be including blonde” (p.21). The development of these effective home hair dyes brought the possibility of this assimilation closer to reality regardless of ethnic origin. Polykoff began dyeing her hair at the age of fifteen and then later when her own daughter’s hair began to darken at thirteen years of age, she dyed hers too.

Her campaigns, which began in the early 1950’s, continued to run until the late 1970’s during her twenty-year career with the company. She can be credited with such

unforgettable slogans as, “Is it true blondes have more fun?”, “If I’ve only one life to live let me live it blonde”, and “Does she or doesn’t she?” These successful campaigns resulted in the tremendous growth of the hair coloring industry. In 1957, *Look* magazine reported that 55 million American women were adding color to their hair. At the conclusion of Polykoff’s career the percentage of American women who colored their hair had jumped from seven percent in the 1950’s to more than forty percent during the 1970’s (Pitman, 2003).

Just as it is common today for movie stars or sports icons and legends to endorse certain products, clever advertising agents have always known how to get the attention of the general public. By putting the face of the most famous Hollywood star on the box of their product, sales were sure to increase. But with the hope of selling a product to the “average” consumer, they too realized they needed to use the image of the girl next door. A motherly type, often pictured with small children presented the wholesome image for suburban woman. This was just what caused the continued rise in the hair coloring products industry. As a result, the negative connotations began to fade. Adding to this, the “does she or doesn’t she” question, the negative “sex-pot” sexual images of becoming blonde would surely be quenched, if only just temporarily. We would see the return of this negative image not too many years down the road.

After the second World War, it was common for women to be in the work force. Many had worked outside of the home for the first time to help make ends meet because they had no choice. During that time it was necessary for many women to work outside of the home in order to supplement the family income. As they began to feel comfortable with the newfound freedom of having their own spending money, their self-confidence

soon began to grow. As a result of this newfound confidence, many women began to feel less-dependent upon the men in their lives for financial security. The rise of the feminist movement continued to add to their self-confidence and feelings that they were valued members of our society and worthy of societal respect.

Women began expressing this confidence by their wardrobe choices and hair styles. The rise of the nineteen sixties hippie era of long, free flowing hair shouted expressions of their freedom loud and clear. The message soon became undeniably obvious that women wanted and deserved respect and freedom. True equality was for them a dream and fueled by the fires of the rising Civil Rights Movement.

Further, the Civil Rights Movement not only caused increased racial tension, but also caused men to question their own masculinity that had previously been unquestioned. Ideals were supported at least in part by the fact that women had generally been dependent upon men in many ways, including financially. Now more and more of them had their own money. Several forces were now challenging the white male's power and the continuation of the status quo. Women had begun going to college, working outside of the home, dying their hair if they chose, and questioning the world around them. Besides the popularity of blondes presented by Hollywood, the image and attitude of blonde superiority was even further perpetuated by the obvious decline in domestic cultural relations. Prejudiced stereotypes were becoming more prevalent during the same time when minorities were seeking a voice and more and more women were beginning to dye their hair blonde. While women too are considered a minority, a blonde woman's European-American affiliation was undeniable.

As an example, Rita Hayworth, another Hollywood star was actually born Margarita Cansino. Her birth name was unmistakably Spanish and lacked the “All American” appeal. She eventually had her hairline altered by electrolysis and dyed it strawberry blonde. With diction lessons and speech tutors she was successful in erasing most traces of her Spanish decent. She was often photographed against rural backdrops usually wearing red, white, and blue patriotic attire. This wholesome, and ‘girl next-door image” added to her popularity and she quickly became a box office hit. Ethnicity was clearly not valued during her time in our history (Pitman, 2003).

As the popularity of television rose and became more common in American households, so did the appeal of a more docile role for women starlets. Hollywood now tried to cash in on the innocent, girl next-door type image. Women and men alike were less threatened by the Debbie Reynolds, Doris Day, and Sandra Dee type clean-cut, girl next door images than they had previously been by the self confident attitudes beginning to sprout up throughout the country. These new stars presented their girlish exuberance and it was a direct blow to the tender shoots of female emancipation. They were inoffensive girls with a clean and unthreatening sexuality. Doris Day was considered as wholesome as a bowl of Cornflakes. One thing prevailed though, and that is the desire to be white and preferably blonde was still going strong.

Later, in the 1960’s we were introduced to Elly May Clampett in *The Beverly Hillbillies*. This character was played by a little known actress of the time named Donna Douglas. She became wealthy playing up on the notion of innocent sexuality. This innocence was projected through her blonde hair, which was styled in a child like fashion of pigtailed adorned with ribbons. Her red and white checked blouse was tied up around

her waist to show just a tiny bit of her mid rift and surely accentuate her cantaloupe-sized breasts.

Music too, has projected the image of these blonde icons. One example is through the harmonistic lyrics of the Beach Boys. They sang about blonde girls and beach bunnies on the sand. Bleaching your hair by the sun and surf was considered healthy and desirable. Added to a glowing tan, what could be a more pronounced picture of health? Their music added to the notion that being blonde was the aspirational standard of what was considered the ultimate American beauty at the time.

Dolly Parton has made a lucrative career out of presenting herself as a busty blonde bombshell. From a very early age she has worked hard to look the part. In her autobiography *Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business* (1994) she writes, “I wanted to look sexy from the time I was about ten. I saved what money I could from the ‘Cas Walker Show’ to buy peroxide, makeup, and sexy clothes” (p.126). She has said in many interviews that, “It takes a lot of money to look this cheep” (Parton, 1994). She began her career as a country singer and her first recorded song was ironically entitled, “Dumb Blonde” (1967). She apparently is not so dumb though as she has won every major music award with songs ranging from pop and contemporary country to traditional country and bluegrass. She owns and operates *Dollywood*, a theme park located in Tennessee. Known today as a very shrewd businesswoman, just as much as she is known for her blonde hair and big boobs, she continues to turn heads despite her age. Her successes in managing and sustaining her career over several decades makes her anything but a dumb blonde, but it is essentially her image of this big haired, big boobed singer that has made her so popular.

Madonna too made quite a splash when she adapted the Marilyn Monroe look during the nineteen ninety's. She poignantly titled one concert tour, "Blonde Ambition." Her costumes depicted the same style of fashions commonly worn by Monroe during the fifties and her hair was dyed the same platinum blonde Monroe wore during the height of her career. Madonna's success during this tour and many others that followed helped to secure her position as one of the most powerful performers of the 1990's. Today, her hair color is noticeably darker, as she performs the role of a wife and mother. She has traded her scantily clad costumes for a cardigan set worn with a simple strand of pearls. This wholesome look may still make the front page of tabloid papers because of the lasting image of her early nineties persona.

Moving forward some forty years after the Beach Boys will bring us to the music sensations of today like Britney Spears, Jessica Simpson, and Christina Aguilera. Each has soared to pop stardom and as all of their early publicity shots prove, they have become blonder as they have climbed the charts. This simple correlation of time and success, tied to their change in hair color, makes me wonder are they turning more blonde because they are successful, or are they so successful because they are blonde.

As the seventies approached, we began to see women portrayed more in career-oriented positions on television. This is true with the three female detectives working for a mysterious never seen via the camera's lens, Charlie. Jacquelyn Smith, Kate Jackson, and Farrah Fawcette each became an overnight success as a result of being cast as young actresses on *Charlie's Angels*. But it was the blonde character played by Farrah whose picture we seen all over the media in numerous forms. Her personal success was a reflection of the attention her character received on the show. She supplemented her

actress wages by posing for a sexy calendar. Her red wet suit pictured on the cover was soon turned into a poster and flew off of shelves wherever it was sold. Over eight million copies were sold. She was the picture of health, beauty, and fitness. While she rose to the heights of stardom she too created a commonly sought after hairstyle of the time. Blonde streaks ran through her layered locks, and gave the essence of freedom and vigor. While I was in middle school during the mid seventies, several of my own girlfriends had the Farrah feathers. This hairstyle was to the 1970's the same as what the Jennifer Aniston cut and style became for the early 1990's.

Hair dye would actually become a symbol of women's liberation for the early 1970's. Consequently, many began dying their hair or continued the process because they liked it. They colored their hair because it made them feel younger, sexy, vibrant, or just different than they would in their natural color. They were in control of their own image and appearance. No longer were they coloring their hair to please someone else. And no longer, were they in an attempt to attract attention from the opposite gender. They were choosing to color their hair only for themselves. Joanna Pitman (2003) tells us that this is at essentially the same time that men were hopelessly trying to maintain what had been the status quo of power over women. She writes,

Young women were dying their hair for themselves. And those men still living among the outdated sexist ideas of automatic male dominance were clinging to the blonde bimbo. Concerted efforts were being made to maintain the dumb blonde image and this was increasingly represented by the blonde joke (2003, p.244). The creation of the 'dumb blonde' writes Pitman, "amounted to an attempt-consciously or otherwise- to subvert the growing power of women" (p.232).

These jokes followed the ethnic stereotype negativity towards blondes just as they had done previously for blacks, Italian, and people of Polish decent. Whether conscious or not, it appears to have been an attempt to make these women loose the credibility they felt they had been gaining both from emotional and financial independence.

Examples:

- Why did the blonde stare at the can of orange juice?
Because the label said to *concentrate!*
- What do you call a blonde with two brain cells? Pregnant.
- Do you know how dumb blondes are? They're so dumb they spend all day trying to put a bag of M&M's in ABC order.
- And my all time personal favorite:
- What do you call a blonde who dyes her hair brunette? Artificially intelligent.

Charles Marowitz (1977) described the attributes of the dumb blonde in an article he wrote for *Listener* magazine many years ago. He writes, "This is a creature (speaking about the dumb blonde) who makes no pretence of being well-read or intellectually gened up. She does not enter into sophisticated word play. Her most salient points are physical, and imbued with a kind of irresistible sexuality.....she protrudes in the right places" (p.244). It is essentially this type of small talk that actually enhances her appeal and attractiveness in the eyes of some men. These men, who seem to have a need to feel superior in an intellectual capacity over women can perpetuate this image effortlessly.

The image of the dumb blonde like other generalizations or stereotypes, seem to level the playing field for others who are lacking in self-confidence or whose power may

feel threatened. Nick Lacey (1998) writes that, “Stereotypes serve to naturalize the power relationships in society” (p.139). Usually a construction of the dominant ideology of men, the white man to be more specific, this and other stereotypes are projected to make women appear subservient beings, and continue their need to depend on the very men who may feel threatened by this surge of independence.

Turning Point:

Eventually, middle class women from all over the country began to recognize the obvious gender discrimination around them. The feminist movement was now well under way and this coincided historically with the civil rights movement. Women were now speaking out and gaining positions of respect in many professional fields. It was simply not uncommon now for a young woman to forgo marriage immediately after high school in order to pursue other endeavors. Attending or better yet graduating from college was a sure way to gain independence and become self-sufficient.

One such young lady was Ilon Specht. She worked as a copywriter in a mostly male dominated profession. She was constantly faced with rejection every time she wrote the word “woman” into a line of commentary for her commercials or advertising agencies. In 1973 she joined a team that was working on a commercial for L’Oreal. The company was trying to gain a portion of the hair color industry from Clairol. The new hair dye they were attempting to market was called *Preference*. Specht herself, considered the wider social view of the time and decided not to write the ad as though the intention was to attract or please men, but from the current mindset of the woman of that era, a time of female confidence and independence. What she came up with was the text

for a commercial that has continued to run in various forms for over thirty years now. She wrote,

“I use the most expensive hair color in the world! Preference, by L’Oreal. It’s not that I care about money. It’s that I care about my hair. It’s not just the color, I expect great color. What’s worth more to me is the way my hair feels. Smooth and silky, but with body. It feels good against my neck. Actually, I don’t mind spending more for L’Oreal. Because I’m worth it” (Pitman, 2003).

This single ad changed the emphasis from the dependent woman Clairol had always portrayed in their commercials to a confident, self-assured customer for L’Oreal. While the ads Clairol had used became wholesome and acceptable for the girl next door’s personal image, they were still reflecting ideals of a male dominated society. L’Oreal had now swung the pendulum in the other direction. It was Specht’s proposal in that single ad was that independent women of the time had the desire to look good for *themselves*, and not for anyone else, especially a man. This simple commercial captured the rising feminist ideals of the day, and Preference products began to rally the sales of the Clairol Company even though they were a bit more expensive. Over the years numerous high profile blondes have been featured saying those very same words. Today, stars such as Heather Locklear, Cybil Sheppard, and Sarah Jessica Parker have been cast to read those very same lines. L’Oreal sent out a message that was loud and clear, “That women should work on their appearance not to catch a man, but to demonstrate their own self worth” (Weitz, 2004 p.22).

In retaliation of this feeling of competence and independence, the dumb blonde jokes were becoming more and more common. It appears that weakening the strength of the independent minded, self assured, attractive blonde could be more easily accomplished if her image became tarnished and her self confidence destroyed by imposing these negative stereotypical jokes. The accusations of her intellectual weakness are still continued to this day and can be seen in various aspects of popular culture in television shows, clothing, and movies.

Current Perspective:

In recent years, Hollywood has continued to feed the American public many unrespectable and negative images of women in general and blondes more specifically at every given chance. Modern movie moguls present fictional characters in sitcoms that read unthinkable lines. These comments made by our current starlets continue to fuel this popular culture persona of the unintelligent, weak minded and unmistakably blonde female.

Chrissy Snow the fictional character in the late 1970's sitcom *Three's Company* played by Suzanne Somers helped further this commonly known stereotype that women with blonde hair are somewhat dumb as evidenced by the common misunderstandings portrayed by Chrissy's character. Once, when a police officer came to investigate a robbery at their residence, he asked, "Who would leave an envelope marked "Rent" with money in it in plain sight? No one's that stupid," to which Chrissy replied, "But we are!" In another episode, Chrissy was picked up by a police officer, which believed she was a prostitute despite her innocent and good intentions (n.a. 2006, answers.com).

Maddie Hayes was the beautiful fashion model turned detective in the eighty's hit show *Moonlighting* played by Cybill Shepard. This character displayed a continuous slapstick comedic delivery of lines opposite her more serious straight-laced detective partner on the show played by Bruce Willis. Her character highlighted the sarcastic and wacky tone and attitude of a former model now down on her luck because a former accountant had bankrupt her investments. Before losing all of the money, the money that she had earned from a very lucrative career where she was paid just because she was beautiful. Interesting I think, that this character was cast as a blonde and not a more serious looking brunette such as Andie McDowell or perhaps Linda Carter both of whom were popular and successful actresses of the day. This character depicts Maddie as a dingy blonde not smart enough to keep up with her own financial well being and even less competent enough to hire an accountant who would not take advantage of her trusting nature.

Pamela Anderson Lee's noticeably bleached blonde hair and breast augmentation has become a vital part of her popularity and defines her physical identity in the public's eye. She was born Pamela Denise Anderson on July 1, 1967 in Ladysmith, British Columbia, Canada. Today, she is known for her roles in *Married with Children*, her role as Lisa in the television sitcom *Home Improvement* and as C. J. a beautiful young lifeguard in another series called *Bay Watch*. In addition to these television appearances, she has graced the cover of nine *Playboy* magazines. She has turned the evolution of her breast into what seems to be her second career. Tabloid headlines covering her sex life and the ever-changing size of her breasts leave little to be pondered. They were big, but then she wanted them bigger, but oh, now wait, now that she's a stay at home mom

perhaps she is concerned about the image she is presenting in the watchful eyes of her two small sons. In 2002 there were reports of her breast implants actually being removed (n. a. 2006, pamwatch.com). Apparently not for long, because I recently saw her on a talk show interview discussing her recent divorce from Kid Rock. Her implants were noticeably smaller, but none the less evident.

Today I sit and wonder if perhaps Pamela Anderson herself has ever wondered about the image she is projecting and portraying in the eyes of her two young sons. Could this not be the motive behind her breast reduction surgery?

Another contemporary blonde whose popularity spans over three decades is Goldie Hawn. She first became familiar in the public eye when she was originally hired as a dancer on the former television show *Laugh-In*. From 1968 until 1970 she made the audience laugh when she continuously flubbed her lines as she was reading the jokes she was given on the teleprompter. Realizing she was a natural at just making people laugh, this accidental character secured her persona as a typical dumb blonde. Hawn has starred in nearly thirty films since her silver screen debut in *Cactus Flower* (1969) where she won an Oscar for her role as a Best Supporting Actress. Films such as *Shampoo* (1975), *Private Benjamin* (1980), *Overboard* (1987), *First Wives Club* (1996) and *The Banger Sisters* (2002) are some of her most notable credits. In many of her roles she is playing an intellectually challenged character that either makes silly mistakes or is taken advantage of because of her naivety. Unlike most other actresses, her hair is consistently blonde regardless of the movie or character she plays (n.a.2006, Wikipedia.org).

The movie *Legally Blonde* (2001) and *Legally Blonde II* (2003) starring Reese Witherspoon has continued to bring the image of blondes to the forefront of Hollywood

drama and character portrayals. Elle Woods was the cute, blonde character played by Witherspoon. Early in the movie, Elle is dumped by her boyfriend when he goes off to Harvard Law School. He tries to explain to her his need for a dark haired girlfriend, one that “looks smart” so that he himself would appear more studious. This incident occurred on the very same date that Elle had expected a marriage proposal. He tells her, “If I am going to run for an office in the senate by the time I’m thirty, I need someone who looks like Jackie, not Marilyn.” Visibly shaken and hurt, Elle began to cry and in total dismay yelled back at him, “So you’re breaking up with me because I’m, because I’m blonde!”

This movie, while cashing in on the comedic assets so easily recognized as the stereotypical image of the dumb blonde, surprisingly actually offers a defense to the intellectual abilities of this character later on in the story line. Here, Hollywood’s portrayal that this blonde defies the common stereotype is an attempt I believe to rectify the very offensive characterization and politically incorrect dramatization they had just presented. To me, the movie did an adequate job of dispelling the myth of the dumb blonde by allowing the character to grow intellectually as the movie’s storyline progressed on the screen. The character of Elle grew intellectually from being a materialistic shallow *Sorority Sue*, into an academically accomplished law student. By the end of the movie, Elle herself was a Harvard graduate being offered an associate position at a prestigious law firm. This was a far cry from the initial image of the “dumb blonde.”

More recently, we have seen the rising star of Jessica Simpson. This Texas native led the media into a feeding frenzy about her question of whether tuna was chicken or fish. Her questions about the species and the origin of this particular protein was used as

a topic for late night comedians and was later capitalized upon when she became the spokes person for *Star-Kist Tuna*. The “chicken of the sea” it seems sold more units when the popular blonde female promoted it and has even poked fun at her own ignorance. While these words were spoken on her own reality show, which we will never know if the comment was intentional or not, brought up serious questions of her own intelligence. Was this a serious question from her own inquisitiveness or was this just another attempt to water down the intelligence of a beautiful, young blonde by Hollywood promoters looking to make a buck. If this was a staged, well thought out plot by either she or her producers, from an economic standpoint we must admit it was a smart move on her own behalf as well as the company selling the *Star-Kist* brand tuna. But the negative image being projected to millions of young women and a society as a whole is hardly worth the rise in tuna sales as far as I am personally concerned.

Brittney Spears does not help the continued perpetuation of these negative images by driving around with her infant son on her lap. Her son, Sean Preston, was photographed both unrestrained by a seat belt and in the front seat of his mother’s SUV. This picture was plastered all over the tabloids in addition to being top line journalism in primetime television. She tried to explain herself in an interview I watched last spring as she hopelessly tried to defend herself by saying that she was from the country and that’s what people do. They ride around with their children on their lap. Los Angeles, CA however, is not the country.

Paris Hilton is another modern day blonde who continues to make numerous poor decisions landing her on the front page of every tabloid and newspaper. Her various escapades of car accidents, DUI arrests, and sexual videos where she herself is the star,

make for great copy lines in any paper or tabloid publication. An actress and model, these titles make her the typical pretty blonde that present an image to the public that she doesn't have to be smart or make sound decisions in order to succeed. Her other credits of handbag or jewelry designer and the 2004 founder of *Heiress Records*, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers Records fall short of making headlines.

Last year we saw the rise in popularity of A. B. C's. evening drama entitled *Grey's Anatomy*. Cast among the young medical professionals is a beautiful blonde actress named Katherine Heigl who plays a young surgical intern named Izzie Stevens. While the producers of this show have done a fair job of casting both male and female physicians as hospital residents, I find it almost ironic that it is Izzie, whose character is a former swimsuit model and also happens to be blonde. When several storylines continue to mention her former profession, the character later feels the need to defend her own decision to pay for medical school by selling pictures of herself rather than to leave school hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. The concern of being stereotyped as nothing but a beautiful blonde, the character of Izzie even states this in several storylines during the first season. David Bianculli (2006) writes, "In the pilot episode Izzie begged to be taken seriously for her skills, rather than just stereotyped as an attractive blonde" (p.1). Throughout the season this character seems to be an intellectual equal to her peers, all the while being harassed about posing for pictures but during the last episode however, she makes a poor decision in the care and treatment of one of her patients, which ultimately leads to her leaving the medical profession. It is precisely this performance though that makes the actress feel as though she has finally gotten the respect in her career that she deserves. Bianculli reports that Katherine drew on her own

real emotions for this last performance of the 2006 season by remembering the tragic death of her brother who died in a car accident when he was just one week shy of his own sixteenth birthday (Bianculli, 2006).

An actress cast with red or brunette hair could have just as easily portrayed the character in this particular plot. But it is a blonde who makes a fatal decision, which will ultimately end her career. A blonde, whose former career as a fashion model just happened to have paid her way through medical school. Perhaps it is my own sensitivity and image of this character that I choose to criticize the casting choices of Hollywood professionals. But this to me just appears to be one more attempt to make blonde women appear inadequate and in this case lack adequate medical judgment.

As recently as this fall, *Dateline* with Matt Lauer interviewed Debbie LeFave. The former teacher is currently working as a waitress. She is now a registered sex offender and currently under house arrest for the next three years. She will remain on probation for another seven years as the result of having a sexual relationship with a student at the school where she worked in Tampa, Florida when he was just 14 and she was 23. Her attorney, John Fitzgibbous explains her inappropriate relationship as a manifestation of her diagnosis of having Bipolar Disorder, and having been raped herself in her early teen years.

In his closing remarks of the *Dateline* show entitled *Crossing the Line*, Matt Lauer used the following words to describe this blonde haired, blue-eyed young woman. He said, “Debra LeFave: she is blonde, beautiful, and bi- polar.” I have to wonder had she been a brunette or had beautiful black hair because of an Asian heritage if he would

have closed the show with a modifier referring to hair of another color. I doubt they would catch the viewer's attention as easily.

Summary

The collection of literature reviewed above has outlined numerous research findings and points of interest as they are related to the issues of the construction of identity, gender, popular-culture, and their collective contributions to hair color. The upcoming chapter and literature covered in that section will address the importance of narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method and also provides examples of how the retelling of individual life stories can be used to glean valuable data for the purpose of better educating our students in today's multi-faceted classroom setting. The new information I hope to find in this study, will hopefully aid in the effort to combat against the negative stereotypes and generalizations commonly presented in our media about women with blonde hair.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the method of inquiry I used in this study to answer my primary research questions. Through examples of prior research, I will offer the work from other theorists who have successfully used this method for educational research purposes. It will be my intention to disclose the real life experiences from the lives of the participants who entrusted me with personal details from their lives for this study. Their collective stories and voices will allow me to report the findings, which will help to answer my three most important research questions:

1. What if any were the influences of popular culture in their personal identity and image construction?
2. What experiences of discrimination have they encountered?
3. What were the positive motivating factors, which helped to pave the way for their successful accomplishments in life?

Theoretical Framework of Narrative Inquiry

I chose narrative inquiry for the theoretical framework from which this research will be based because narrative inquiry provides the researcher a story gleaned from the lived experience of participants. This methodological framework used by Dewey will be further discussed in this chapter. From a personal perspective, I believe that each life has a story to tell and share. I further believe that these stories are relevant to the classroom setting and the constructions of one's identity because our prior experiences help mould and shape us into whom we will later become. It is my intent to unveil the fascinating yet

ordinary stories of the lives of my subjects during this study and later report on the contributing factors of their successes and obstacles each have faced.

A popular nighttime journalism show frequently airs a segment in titled something like, “Across America.” For each of these segments, the reporting journalist blindly points to a large map of the United States. From there he chooses a state, and then does the same thing for choosing the city. The process goes on until he blindly points to a specific address and phone number in the local phone book. Then, without warning or any additional notice the journalist knocks on the door of unexpected, ordinary people. There, he begins an uncanned conversation with the residents, which inevitably unveils a heart-warming story. It may be the story of lost loves, one that reveals significant historical accounts of that specific geographical location, memories of war, or just funny experiences about life in rural or even urban America. These stories about seemingly ordinary people continue to fascinate me each time I see them. I think it is absolutely amazing how the average person, can often share with the viewer their extra ordinary experiences from what would otherwise seem to be an ordinary existence. I share this here because it is my belief that we all have these experiences to share if only we will take the time to tell them, and others will take the time to listen. Narrative inquiry is the process of gaining information from stories such as these.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1990) “The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (p. 2). Humans, as explained there, are the storytelling organisms who either individually or as a group lead storied lives. Narrative theory offers a close examination into these lived experiences. It is my intention to reveal

the experiences within the lives of the participants for my study. I want to know their struggles and the celebrations of their lives as they have lived them as a blonde.

Diane Dubose-Brunner (1994) writes that, “It is through our personal experience that we come to know” (p.58). Here, she explains that through our story we make it known. “In narrative we weave the fabric of our lives (and others) connecting information with experience to construct knowledge” (Dubose-Brunner, 1994, p.58). This study will further reveal the new knowledge and connections from the common threads shared across the varied professional landscapes of my participants. What they now know, is that they have each learned from their multiple experiences and it is precisely those stories, which will give me the information I hope which will answer my research questions.

Using narrative inquiry to tell the stories of these accomplished women will offer a closer view into the meaning of blondeness in their own view and how it has or hasn't affected their various successes and struggles with this image. I will look for common threads to help explain this phenomenon and also discredit its popular acceptance. This will be a new contribution to the field of curriculum theorists, breaking new ground in the research of identity because I will focus on hair color and the images portrayed in the media.

Historical Development of Narrative Inquiry and Theory

The lived experience used as a means for research is grounded in the fields of anthropology and sociology. In more modern times though, origins point to the initial work done by John Dewey as the educator who used commonly used it in his work and wrote about the many advantages of sharing these lived experiences. His philosophical

stance and position once it became developed was known as pragmatism. John Dewey can be credited for the initial use of this lived experience we now call narrative inquiry. He writes, “Reflective thinking ...involves a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty...reflective persons...wait, ponder, and deliberate a process of evaluating what occurs to them in order to decide upon its force and weight for their problem” (1910, p. 129). Through this reflective thinking, the stories of one’s life can easily arise. It is the sharing of these stories that brings us the practice of narrative inquiry.

Later, in his 1939 book *Experience and Education*, Dewey explains that education is social in process; therefore experience is developed through that process. He writes, “The principle that development of experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a social process” (Dewey, 1939, p.36). An individual’s experience is the sound foundation from which their personal perceptions are drawn and further interactions with others can then proceed. To be social, experience must be shared with fellow human beings. The learning then, which takes place in a classroom is not necessarily limited to that specific location. Each student’s prior experience or schemata is added to that social process of education. It is from this view, that narrative researchers can then find the common ground or through line of common experience to draw meaningful conclusions about the data being analyzed. It is when students share these experiences with others that we can become enlightened by the meanings of their narratives and, as researchers and educators we are able to interpret that very data and find new meaning.

Today, educational scholars such as Anna Neumann and Penelope Peterson have reported on this very premise as first proposed by Dewey. They write, “A teacher’s

knowledge about teaching derives from teachers' own lives" (Neumann & Peterson 1997, p.1). Though some scholars are reluctant to pursue this idea; for some, and woman especially, reflecting on their own life through autobiography as a means for their own research is often productive. This narrative method allows their prior experiences to bring forth knowledge and new ways of knowing into the classroom where students and teachers alike make and can share new experiences together. This very concept and use of prior experience can be easily applied to the process of learning in general as we apply our prior experiences to our current lives and reflect on the new meanings as they evolve and are acquired.

In addition to John Dewey, Neumann and Peterson, Maxine Greene also writes literature supportive of the use of narrative inquiry. In her 1994 book entitled *Releasing the Imagination*, she writes in the preface, "Every one of us inhabits a humanly fabricated world, is mortal and can acknowledge that mortality, and can tell the story of what happens to him or her as he or she lives" (p.4). The coherence, she later explains, "Of what may seem to us to be a totally alien world in the person of another, we are called upon to use our imaginations to enter into that world, to discover how it looks, and feels from the vantage point of a person whose world it is" (Greene, 1994, p.4). As we share our stories, and carefully listen to the stories of others we have the opportunity to at least secondarily, feel what others feel as they live in this same humanly constructed world. Like Greene, I believe it is our imaginations are the vehicle by which she proposes that we travel. As teachers, having the opportunity to influence small children she suggests, "That we allow opportunities for students to structure their experiences by means of those text, by means of books men and women have made" (p.120). Those "texts" she is

speaking of is the texts of our student's lives. The books we all read and hear as we learn to appreciate each story told. Their stories can then be shared and valued by others.

Further, I come to the conclusion that Greene supports the value of narrative inquiry in the reference she makes to experience in her 2001 book *Variations on a Blue Guitar*. There she writes, "Meaning refers to connections made in experience as well as to the definition of certain terms" (Greene, 2001, p.67). It is the retelling of these stories of experience that brings value to others in this sort of inquiry. The meaning that we as educators can glean from other's experiences, are enlightening to the classroom and its inhabitants. We can at least attempt to see what they see, feel what they feel. Human relationships, when shared with others can be a powerful educational tool. This social aspect is the same social aspect proposed by John Dewey many years before.

Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin are two very well known authors and advocates of narrative inquiry and its uses as a research method. Together as partners and individually the two have written dozens of articles and books most of which are about or examples of the narrative method. They have not only written about the advantages of using narrative inquiry, but have used this form of research inquiry in their own original research. Their focus is not only on telling a story but telling the correct story and promoting this research method among their own students in Canada. Through their various writings and examples of their own research, I have come to understand that narrative inquiry is a useful tool for finding the often "hidden meanings or messages" that traditional quantitative research might miss. They write, "The contribution of narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims

that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Through narrative inquiry, I hope to find new meanings of how bloneness has affected the lives of my particular subjects. I hope to find out about their specific challenges and shortcomings and how their hair color might have influenced the perceptions others have held about them in a negative or positive light along with how these same women have each managed to overcome the negative images produces in popular culture.

Many other researchers have begun to use narrative theory in recent years. Among them are Nell Noddings, Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, Ming Fang He, and Joanne Phillion. Each has contributed to the field of curriculum studies by using this form of research to voice the importance of using the stories of experience in their own writings as they share their research findings with others through various publications.

Noddings, (1998) writes that, “Narrative research invites interpretation and reinterpretation. It provides a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge stories from many different perspectives. And the criteria used by narrative researchers can be used to evaluate the stories” (p. 130). “These stories” she continues, “induce a multiplicity of meanings” (p.131). Listening to the stories of my subjects will enable me to interpret the meanings of their experiences and challenges in their lives as they relate to their hair color.

Nettles, (2001) discusses narrative in terms of loss and survival as she shares her own medical recovery and experiences of a brain tumor. In this work she proclaims her narrative of survival as in her life as a black woman. She writes, “I was all too familiar with the survival narrative; for many of us, it is the only story we know- how to get from

day to day” (p.148). As her recovery progressed she explains her loss moving into survival in terms of a “new narrative”. This new narrative she proclaims is built on the two fundamental human tendencies identified by psychologists. She states, “One is agency, expressed in striving for power and independence.” The other as the, “Motivational theme is connection, the strivings for love and intimacy” (p.149). As we go about our day to day lives and responsibilities being connected to others and having commonalities become the mortar of our being and the narrative of each of our lives.

In addition to Nettles, Nell Noddings has written quite a bit about the connections between humans. One of the most noted connections she discusses is that of the relationship between *care* and the connections we have with others. These connections offer valued information to theorists and philosophers interested in these matters. Her writings are relevant to my study because of the connected relationships people have with one another and to the society in which they live. The relevance of these stories and relationships are made when they become meaningful to the reader and researcher. Noddings (1992) explains the importance of this connection as, “The more connected the self is to others, the better the self is” (p. 21). While examining the stories of my blonde subjects, it will be their personal connections with their family, friends, and society that will further add to the evidence of the importance of this overall connection. Hopefully, I will be able to find the connections within their collective stories, which will become the relevant connections for my particular study.

Ming Fang He and Joanne Phillion, both former students of Michael Connelly use narrative inquiry to communicate to educators and fellow theorists as they share about the multi-cultural and the cross-cultural experience from their own lives. Reading several of

their writings has given me great insight into the various advantages of using stories to show valuable educational research. While their work on multicultural differences is not of particular help in my own research inquiry per say, reading about the language differences in a classroom setting and how they chose to use narrative inquiry to show their findings was helpful as I read numerous examples of the uses of narrative inquiry for the purpose of original research studies.

In the publication, *A narrative inquiry of cross-cultural lives: lives in the North American academy* (2002) Ming Fang He examines the identity development of three Chinese women teachers and shares the dynamics and mobility of their lives in both Western and Eastern cultures. She uses the river as a metaphor to show the connections in this life based narrative inquiry to describe the cross-culture exchanges between both culture and language flowing between China and America. Making the case for narrative research, she writes, “Understandings of our cross-cultural lives and cross-cultural identities are not easily obtained through conventional ways of thinking” (p. 3). This article discussed her own challenges in the composition writing process of her own doctoral dissertation and the difficulty of “switching voices” between the fictional characters and interpreting the stories she had collected. Learning to think and write in narrative just as He did in this work should yield me the results I am seeking. The stories found in the lived experience will provide the qualitative data I am seeking for this study.

In *Landscapes of Diversity: The Autobiographical Origins of a Narrative Inquiry* (2001) Phillion discusses the value and importance of the researcher’s own past experiences and how that easily adds to the researcher’s interest in a chosen topic for research and inquiry. This article is a report on a narrative study she conducted from

1996-1998 in an inner city school in Toronto, Canada. Her goal in this study was to accurately portray life in a multicultural school and classroom and to document the educational practices, which enable immigrant and minority students. She writes, “I found that my interest in the inquiry grew out of my past experiences” (p.5). It is her idea that interest in a subject usually always stems from an autobiographical origin. Phillion states, “A narrative inquiry almost always seems to have strong autobiographical roots” (p.5). This is certainly the case with my own study proposed here. When given such a broad scope from which to write a dissertation, I actually had to look no further than my own life. Struggles and triumphs from my own life as I have lived it as a blonde have resurfaced time and time again as I have begun to report on the same struggles of my participants.

Janet Miller has also used narrative inquiry as a powerful tool in her own educational research. One such example is in *Creating Spaces and Finding Voices* (1990) a collaborative work that uses narrative inquiry to share the journey of five classroom teachers and herself; a university professor. Here, she examines the challenges and possibilities of teacher empowerment. This three year study she writes, “Became a mosaic of experiences that provided concrete portrayals of the difficulties and possibilities that teachers encounter when they try to view their work and their knowledge as evolving and creating processes” (Miller 1990, p. x). The story told through this research study is an example of how there can be individual stories multi-layered within one larger narrative. The chemistry of this research team unfolded as the individual differences and shared similarities began to emerge into a narrative community.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln editors of *The Landscape of Qualitative Research and Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (1998) have put together a collection of works that easily serve as a guide when using qualitative research methods. Among the many reasons they promote the use of qualitative research over statistical type data is the relationships that usually evolves between the researcher and subject. Another reason is that qualitative research offers an opportunity for self-reflection. Sharing their own prior experiences provide yet another lens from which to view the situation. Denzin & Lincoln (1998) write, “Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their inquiries. They always think reflectively, historically, and “biographically” (p. x i). Further, they write, “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied,” (p.8).

Narrative Inquiry as a Framework for Research

The life histories told through narrative inquiry are the methods that gather, and interpret the stories people can tell from the lives they live. Marshall and Rossman (1999) write that, “People live storied lives and that telling and retelling one’s story helps one understand and create a sense of self” (p. 120). Narrative analysis and life histories can be used across the social science disciplines as a successful research method. I believe that this method of research will be particularly insightful as I seek to understand the lives of the five women who have seemingly dispelled the common myth of the “dumb blonde.” I hope to learn just how they have each successfully overcome these obstacles presented in numerous forms throughout our society. Narrative inquiry shows us, “How the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals”

(Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 121). How the women in my study have managed to successfully overcome the examples of discrimination and preconceived notions about their intelligence will hopefully be revealed as I dissect each of their individual stories and look for commonality in their experiences.

In using narrative research, the aim is to create the many interpreted descriptions and the multi layered meanings from historical and personal events, revealing truths that are grounded in first hand experiences. I will use the first hand experiences of my subjects as they report to me the truths they have each experienced as women with blonde hair (Josselson, Lieblich, and McAdams, 2003). The sum of these five stories will be the evidence I need from which to report my cumulative findings for this study.

Narrative theory is the study of experiences. It unveils the stories of the lived experience. Narrative theory is the inquiry process I used as the methodology, which I gave me the information I sought in order to tell the stories of women who are anything but “dumb.” Like John Dewey, I find that the experiences each of my students brings with them add great value into the classroom for learning process. Likewise, narrative theory and the experience of my subjects will fit easily into this inquiry process. This theory, leads me to the experiences of the women who have seemingly dispelled the popular culture myth so common in our society. This myth and the general assumption is that that they are unintelligent simply because of the color of their hair. This blonde, bimbo character as described before is nothing more than a socially constructed image which was created to make others feel more powerful. Their stories and experiences will provide a very strong foundation upon which to build my

argument that one's hair color has absolutely nothing at all to do with the expected successes or failures of a person.

Narrative inquiry as defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is the way of understanding one's experience. They write, "It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places" (p.20). It is the interpretation of these exchanges by the researcher that brings the story to life. This interpretive function of narrative inquiry takes the researcher out of the realm of mere reporting statistical data and details and into the subjectivities and social relations (Daiute & Fine, 2003). In this study I will give an account of the life histories and experiences of five heterosexual females from various age groups and their experiences in life, school, and work as women who are blonde.

In the initial phase of this study I first prepared an interest inventory for prospective subjects to see who would be interested in participating in this research (see Appendix A). I will randomly choose 25 women who are blonde from my own social acquaintances, church parishioners, colleagues, and even some strangers I approach in a public place. From those who are interested, I chose five women as participants in my inquiry based on their level of interest and commitment to the project, along with having various professional backgrounds and having met various levels and accomplishments.

Interest Survey Results

From the initial interest survey I conducted, I was able to find out the following commonalities among those twenty five women I selected from the original fifty I randomly surveyed. During the first weekend in August 2006 I went to Oglethorpe Mall where I stood just outside of Barnes and Noble. I greeted the first thirty blonde women in

my general vicinity. I smiled as I offered an invitation to participate in the Interest Survey. Twenty-two strangers graciously took the time to answer my checklist. I was still twenty-eight women short, and so I stood outside the reception hall at Isle of Hope United Methodist Church the next morning where I greeted several church going blondes. There I found another nine women willing to answer my survey. The next day I asked eight women at work and then three of my blonde neighbors that same after noon. The following Saturday I found myself outside of Barnes and Noble once more trying to find the remaining eight women I needed to answer my survey.

From the fifty women willing to answer this initial survey I chose the twenty-five women who answered **yes** to their willingness to participate in a more in depth study and who also met my intended age range requirements. Those twenty-five participants were all born between the years of 1962 and nineteen 1972. It was my desire to find willing participants whose age differences were no more than ten years apart. The purpose of this age range was to minimize any generational differences due to changing customs and fad practices. I further wanted my research participants to have had at least ten years of professional experience working in their respective fields. I also narrowed my search for participants by choosing five various fields of work and by those willing to spend the amount of time required in order to further investigate my initial research questions.

1. Do you believe issues of identity are formed solely by personal opinion?

 0 yes 25 no

2. Do you believe one's identity is formed at all through media representation?

 24 yes 1 no

3. Is it your opinion that self-confidence plays any role in the construction of one's identity?
 25 yes 0 no
4. Do you consider yourself successful?
 25 yes 0 no
5. Have you accomplished most of the personal goals you set for yourself as a young adult?
 23 yes 2 no
6. Are there still goals you wish to accomplish
 22 yes 3 no
7. Do you believe you have ever experienced discrimination as a result of your gender?
 24 yes 1 no
8. Do you think you have ever experienced discrimination based on your appearance?
 24 yes 1 no
9. Would you be interested in participating in a study that would uncover some of the questions just asked?
 18 yes 7 no
10. Would you be willing to spend approximately 5-10 hours in self-reflection and with the researcher to answer some these and other probing questions as they might relate to identity stereotyping? 16 yes 9 no

The process of using narrative inquiry as a means to research is supported by the writings of authors and researchers previously mentioned in my literature review such as Diane Dubose-Bruner, Catherine Marshall, and Gretchen B. Rossman, Michael Connelly, Jean Clandinin, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln as well as many others. It is my goal to explain how these lived stories will be beneficial in dispelling this constructed generalization and myth of hair color and it's correlation with intelligence specific to the female gender.

Application of Narrative Inquiry to Present Study

The search for the meaning and understanding in this and other narrative studies is inextricably linked by the telling and what is being told and the hearing and the written (Daiute & Fine, 2003). Overcoming the obstacles and challenges set before my participants can be told through the narrations of their own story. The stories told here from these five women are important because many of the challenges they each faced can be easily recognizable and familiar to others. Examples of discrimination and generalizations these women overcame along with the numerous negative images mirrored throughout our society presented a challenge. Positive outcomes were seen though in part as the result of the support and encouragement from their family, educators, friends, and by their own personal determination to succeed.

Data Collection and Management of Field Texts

In order to negate this perceived myth of the dumb blonde and to show through my research and inquiry that these women are accomplished and are living examples of modern success, I looked closely at the experiences of the women whom I believe can easily discredit this common negative stereotype that is so embed and prevalent in our

culture. The information gathered for the purpose of this study will be from their own autobiographical writings and journal entries, participant profiles (see Appendix B), a series of interviews from questionnaires (see Appendix C). In addition, observations in both a social and professional setting were included. This information was categorized, grouped, and clustered in order to segregate reoccurring categories and themes and key phrases that may surface, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), (Josselson, Lieblich, and McAdams, 2003).

As with all confidential information, certain precautions were taken in order to protect the data as it was collected, transcribed, and recorded. All of the documentation used for this study was kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Likewise I have kept a personal journal for the purpose of my own note taking during this research process and it too is housed in a locked file cabinet in either my home or classroom depending on where it is at the time. Information is organized by category and labeled into three ringed binders.

Participant Profile Questionnaires

During the initial stage of my narrative inquiry research, I provided a detailed participant profile questionnaire for each of the participants. The participant profiles filled out by each woman included detailed biographical information such as their name, age, family structure and home life, the educational institution they attended, educational level obtained, and professional affiliation. Socio-economic class and personal lifestyle from early childhood to the present will also be included in this informative participant profile. These open-ended questions will allow the respondents to, "Tell their own stories

in their own terms,” (McCracken, 1988, p.34) in order to provide me with a solid foundation of their identity.

Autobiographical Writings

Each of my research subjects kept a journal from the time they accept the invitation to participate in this study until the final data was analyzed. Their journal reflections will record memories of their past experiences as well as current interactions during daily activities which will lend evidence to negate the common view of this popular culture myth. Qualitative researchers conclude that, “Life histories and narrative inquiry are methods that gather, analyze, and interpret the stories people tell about their lives,” (Marshall& Rossman, p.120). As the researcher, I will use the information as recorded here to view inside each participant’s family culture, educational experiences, professional accomplishments, and general history of their life. Using this process, it should be easy for me to capture the feelings, views, and perspectives of each woman. Their autobiographical entries will be a way for each to reflect upon and record important prior events and experiences.

Interviews

Grant McCracken (1988) writes that the long interview is an important part of qualitative research because, “It can take us into the life world of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience” (p.9). From this process, the researcher he contends, “Is given the opportunity to step into the mind of another person and, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p.9). This process should be especially useful because of the possibility of providing a more full social and cultural context to this area of interest. It is my intention to use the one on one interview I will conduct with

each participant as a guided conversation. The questions in these interviews will be open ended as suggested by McCracken which will hopefully lead me to the interviewees' own perceptions about how their bloneness has or has not played an integral role in their own identity development or has perhaps provided challenges from which to overcome. After each participant has filled out their participant profile questionnaires, I will use this information to guide some of my interview questions. In addition to the Participant Profile Questionnaires, I will have created a standard set of interview questions, which will be asked in one on one interview with each participant. These open-ended questions will provide me with the stories I will later use to decipher any common threads of experience, discrimination, cultural influence, or motivating factors. I will conduct at least one formal interview with each the participants. The interviews will be recorded and later transcribed in an effort to reveal reoccurring themes and commonalities. These themes will be reported in the data analysis section of this research report.

Observations

Informal participant observations were useful in order to record observable commonalities among the five volunteer participants. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1988), "Field records collected through participant observation in a shared practical setting are one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry" (p. 5). Several of these observations will be conducted while I act as a participant observer as I attend professional meetings, or luncheons with the participant professional colleagues. During others, the participants are going about their usual routines and professional practices as I observe from the sidelines. Likewise, observations in the social setting for each of the five participants will also be taken. Again, during some I will act as a participant observer

but not during all. As the researcher, I will record detailed field notes during these observations sighting the participant's interactions with others, their body language, and the perception of self-confidence or lack thereof from each participant. I will record details of the setting and atmosphere surrounding each event. The interactions observed among the relationships with friends, family, and co-workers will further reveal personality factors, which may provide useful information about their own motivation and the expectations of others.

Coding

After my individual interviews and observations were complete, I used colored highlighters to code reoccurring themes and commonalities of the responses to the interview questions. Motivational responses resulting in a family member or other person being instrumental in one's success or goal attainment will be highlighted in green, personal determination and self motivating factors will be recorded in pink, and the various challenges stemming from negative discrimination or generalizations in reference to hair color or gender will be highlighted in yellow. I will choose additional colors as they become necessary to categorize other themes as they may surface during this research study.

Cross-Analysis of Data

Individual interviews and observations will be transcribed in detail, thoroughly analyzed, and then compared. Hopefully, the data will reveal common threads and experiences shared by each of the participants. Common motivational factors, family influences, and challenges they have each faced will be revealed through careful analysis of their personal narratives. This information will give me the concrete data, which will

answer my initial research questions. It will be the commonalities in their stories reported here which will be the evidence for my final data.

Significance of Study

This original study is significant to the field of education in a very general sense as well as to the field of curriculum studies because it addresses a topic not yet brought to the forefront of current research findings. It is my goal to use this study as a vehicle to raise social conscience and awareness about the subject of discrimination as it relates to hair color. As we move towards becoming a teaching and learning community that lacks the preconceived notions previously mentioned, we must educate not only the children, but also teacher, parents, and community leaders and leave dated stereotypes and generalizations behind. I believe this study is significant because any time a generalization or preconceived ideas about a particular group of people, while common in our society is still unacceptable. Not only in education, but interwoven throughout all areas of our society these generalizations should be blatantly discredited. The evidence provided here should easily show the successes of five women who are well educated and function as successful contributors to our community.

Limitations of Study

This study is limited first and foremost by its small sampling size. Making a broad generalization about all blonde females was never my intent. Because I did not want to present a study that compared blondes with other specific physical identities, this study is limited to the findings I report of the common characteristics of blondes who are female and do not fit the stereotypical image portrayed in our society that women with blonde hair are dumb. Further, this study is limited because it is only a representation of my own

perspective and of the reports I have gathered via my subject's experiences. These experiences are the ones that they chose to share for the purposes of this study. Another limitation is that using subjects from one geographical area does not show a large span of cultural influence due to specific regional exposure. Thus, we cannot assume that a sampling of similar subjects from another geographic location would render the same findings.

Critiques of the narrative inquiry method and other qualitative forms argue that the human tendency to add or delete pertinent information from individual stories may be problematic. One such critique is Molly Andrews (2002) who refers to this as, "The murky side of narrative inquiry" (p.1). In other words, many Sayers believe that the data may be difficult to interpret or that different researchers may glean very different or conflicting findings from the same observations or stories presented. Another limitation is a concern for the issue of subjectivity and ambiguity of text rather than the simple statistical reports of quantitative data. Using narrative inquiry to report findings in research may cause some researchers inexperienced in the methodology to question its proposed validity. While this is a growing field of research, particularly in the area of educational research, it is still considered less than concrete by many.

Summary

Inquiry gleaned from a narrative or a narrative research project is what Susan Chase (2005) refers to as, “Meaning making- the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, of organizing events and objects into meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (p. 656). This narrative study will describe and explain the meanings and understandings I have surmised through the stories of my five participants. As the stories of my inquiry begin to unfold, I hope to find the evidence I need to discount the commonly accepted myth that females with blonde hair are lacking in intellectual capabilities and should expect less success in their academic endeavors or chosen fields than women who are not blonde.

Through the life experiences of my subjects, narrative inquiry will help me understand their stories and to later share their stories with others about how they have managed to overcome the various discriminations of this widely accepted myth. A close and careful investigation into their family, educational, professional, and personal relationships will further lend insight into this study. While I have chosen not to be a participant observer in this research, it is worth noting that this study has indeed become a reflective process of many issues in my own life.

Although I have not written about my own personal experiences as I share those of others, I am not at all surprised at the familiarity of many of the narratives I have heard. Some of my subject’s experiences mirror those of my own and the challenges and attitudes they share are familiar. I have experienced many of the examples they have shared and can personally understand the perspectives from which they speak.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present the relevant life histories and narrative stories from each of my research participants. This chapter introduces their unique personalities, their experiences, and challenges as well as their interpretation of their own lived experiences. The information reveals their family structure, socio-economic position, their memories, and experiences which ultimately uncover their individual identity development which paves the way for their professional development and current acquired success. The data presented here was derived from participant profiles, interviews, observations, and questionnaires.

The participant profiles each provide a brief synopsis and biographical report for the background information on each of the five women. The reflective journals were used for the participants to record their memories about childhood, their educational process, and significant family history. Several of the participants chose pseudonyms in order to protect both their own personal and professional identities and maintain complete confidentiality during the research process. The personal interviews are written in first person in an attempt to aid in the reader's ability to personally align themselves with the participants in order to better understand the perspective from which they speak.

The data was coded by the researcher in order to simplify and organize data as it was obtained. As a result, common threads began to emerge and reveal the shared experiences, background similarities, and personal expectations as observed during this qualitative study.

Personal Profile of Anne Lloyd

Anne Lloyd (pseudonym) is a successful entrepreneur and real estate investor. She has been married for over twenty years and is the mother of three adorable children. At first glance, she is the epitome of elegance. She is striking in her appearance and has a quite sense of grace and poise which can easily be mistaken as shyness. Anne has built a prosperous preschool which serves about 125 students aged eight weeks to four years old. This facility also offers aftercare services for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade from community public and private elementary schools. In addition, she manages a successful real estate portfolio of rental properties she has purchased using money she has reinvested from her educational institution. While she no longer practices as a licensed dental hygienist, she attends recertification classes annually in order to retain a valid state of Georgia certification.

She was born in Savannah, Georgia on July 5th. 1963. Anne was the second daughter and last child born to Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Lloyd, a college educated government worker and a homemaker. The family of four lived a modest middleclass life going to church on Sundays and being active in their community garden clubs and civic organizations. Both girls attended and then graduated from one of Savannah's most popular private schools. Anne reports that she always felt that her parents were the most conservative people she new. "They were conservative in every respect" she told me. "They were conservative with their money, their work, and their beliefs. She continued, "Growing up I always felt like my parents were the strictest of any other parents I knew, but now as an adult and mother myself, I'm glad that my parents set that example before me."

As a child, Anne describes her physical appearance at the age of six as, “Very blonde, thin and homely. I felt like a real Plain-Jane.” At sixteen, she reports that, “I was considered one of the pretty girls, tall, and thin, with sun streaked honey blonde hair, often being asked out by juniors and seniors when I was only in the tenth grade and sixteen years old. At twenty-six, I began to frost my hair because after I had my children it began to lose its luster and look dull. This is when I first began to gain some weight after the birth of my first son.”

She has continued to color her hair in an attempt to restore the yellowish locks of her youth. When asked about the decision to color her hair she replied, “By my late teens and early twenties my hair began to just look dull and mousey. I wanted to brighten my face and add some color to what I felt like was my overall beigeness.” Except for hair color, a sporadic and inconsistent routine physical fitness program, and periodic facial peels, Anne has made no other voluntary alterations to her physical appearance despite the constant struggle to maintain a healthy weight. At forty four years of age, today her weight will sometimes fluctuate a range of between twenty to thirty pounds.

Anne remembers being what she called, “An above average student throughout most of her early school years.” She told me that she felt like learning was pretty much effortless and doesn’t remember any particularly difficult or challenging subjects. “School was always easy I just thought it was ‘supposed’ to be that way.” She reported that she was aware that there were some students that didn’t seem to catch on quite as quickly as she did, but she didn’t really feel like that made her smarter. Her second grade teacher Mrs. Wolsey was always encouraging to me. “I always enjoyed second grade. I guess because Mrs. Wolsey was always so sweet. She encouraged me and made learning

fun. She always offered us hands on activities which was very different from my experiences in a very strict first grade class.” She continued our conversation by telling me several stories about her previous teacher. She was apparently known by all the other students as the meanest first grade teacher at Hesse Elementary school during the late nineteen sixties. “After her, I would have probably liked about any teacher I got for second grade. It just so happened I really like her and she made me feel smart.”

Anne changed schools several different times during her elementary years. This was a direct result for the civil rights movements which called to desegregation of neighborhood schools. She told me that it wasn't that her parents didn't want her to go to school with black children, it was that they didn't believe that she should have to ride a bus for thirty minutes in order to get to school when she had an elementary school less than three miles away. As a result her parents put her in private school. Her middle school years were reported as being uneventful.

After graduating from high school in 1981, Miss Lloyd attended The University of Georgia where she enjoyed an active social life. While was away at school in Athens during the regular school year she didn't work, but during the summer she worked part time at various retail establishments. She later transferred to The Medical College of Georgia where she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Dental Hygiene. Upon graduation, she reports that graduating with a 3.89 GPA was both a proud and surprising accomplishment for someone who was an average high school student. “My sister always made better grades than I did. My parents always thought she was the smart one.”

Anne settled into life as an independent young woman who shared living expenses in a rented house with three other females. While living in Augusta, Georgia

and working as a dental hygienist Anne met and became engaged to a local dental student who put himself through college waiting tables at the local Steak and Ale. They were married four years later and the two set up a private dental practice partnership in a suburban neighborhood near southeast Georgia. She continued to work as a dental hygienist for her husband and several other dentists for the next ten years at which time she decided to stay at home and become a fulltime mother.

As her husband began to dabble in real estate development, Anne also pursued interest outside the field of dentistry. While her family continued to grow, she began to become interested in education and the educational process. This concern grew from her own efforts to find a nurturing and stimulating preschool for her own sons to attend. At one point she even considered going back to college to obtain an undergraduate degree in elementary education. When her small community had no suitable preschool to offer, she decided to rent a small space in one of her husband's strip malls to open a Montessori preschool. Anne, along with a partner began what is now a successful preschool with an enrollment of over a hundred students.

Sunnyside Montessori School (pseudonym) has continued to carry a waiting list of at least twenty students since the first year it opened almost a decade ago. Anne works from her home several hours a week so that she can be available to care for her own small children. She works as the school's accounts payable clerk and draws a salary of over a hundred thousand dollars a year. Her duties include paying the school's expenses and managing the fulltime director as well as sharing the management of the certified and classified teaching staffs along with her partner. Today the school houses three state of Georgia funded pre-kindergarten classrooms as well as a fulltime daycare center which

operates twelve months out of the year. The only time the school is closed is the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Anne herself has now begun to invest in real estate holdings with some the money she earns from her preschool. She currently owns three residential properties, two of which hold no mortgages. She and her husband keep their professional investments and salaries independently of one another both contributing to household expenses as agreed upon in their domestic arrangement. She states that, "This makes me feel financially independent, and also like a financial contributor to our marriage relationship and household expenses. I enjoy the fact that I have the monetary resources to buy my husband nice gifts and to take our family on extended vacations. I also feel that if something were to happen to my husband or our relationship that I could take care of myself as well as my children."

Personal Profile of Michelle Hill

Michelle Hill (pseudonym) is a nineteen year veteran teacher. She is married and the mother of two children. Michelle has the most beautiful clear blue eyes that sparkle like the palest of sapphires each and every time she smiles. She is reserved and a bit shy in her demeanor. As a regular classroom teacher, she was considered "The Best of the Best" by her colleagues and administrators alike. Each year there were numerous reports of parental requests for pupil placement into her class. She is currently teaching as a resource teacher in remedial education offering small group instruction for reading and math skills. She is an important member of the school's Student Study Team and works closely with the classroom teachers of the students she now serves. Her professional

advice is often sought from veteran and less experienced teachers as well as parents who are need of guidance outside of regular classroom instruction.

Michelle Hill was born in Ellenboro, North Carolina on August 29, 1964. She was the fifth and final child born to the Reverend and Mrs. Grayson Hill. Together they raised four daughters and one son while moving every four years as the result of Reverend Hill's mandatory appointments of service within the South Eastern Methodist Charge Conference.

Mrs. Hill was also an educator and homemaker. Michelle describes her socioeconomic position as, "Average income I guess. I never really felt poor," she told me, "but we sure never lived extravagantly either. My father, who was a Methodist minister, did not believe in raising his children to be materialistic and he always encouraged us to be conservative with God's resources." Church and church related activities were always an important part of our family.

Michelle has been involved in competitive sports since her late elementary school years. She played softball for her church's co-ed team, played intramural soccer in college, and today considers herself to be an athletic and sports orientated woman. When asked to describe herself at various ages in life, she said, "I was always small. At six, I was very skinny, snagged tooth, and very blonde. At sixteen I had still not developed breast like many of my friends, and I was very athletic. Being so short, I have always looked petite and dainty. My hair was cut short and was blonde as a teenager. I was twenty-six when I had my son. My hair had begun to darken, and I was short and still small except for my round belly. Today, I continuously have to work out at forty-three years old in order to stay thin. I still enjoy playing softball."

Michelle has been married to her husband Anderson for over twenty years. They met and began dating during the summer after her freshman year of college while they were both working as life guards at the same pool in a small resort in North Carolina. Their courtship lasted for three and a half years and they then married in December after Michelle graduated from college in June.

“I enjoy the beach and pool during my time out of school during the summers,” she told me. “I like to stay thin and fit” she said. She openly admitted that even in the winter she likes to visit a local tanning salon because she likes the way she looks better with a tan. She also admits to having her teeth bleached and occasionally highlighting her hair which is worn much longer now as an adult than it was when she was in her early twenties. “It gets so dark and dull during the winter,” she told me. “I get it highlighted probably every six to eight weeks during the winter months.”

Elementary school was attended in Ellenboro, North Carolina. Michelle reported that she always made A’s and that she remembered being one of the top students in her class. She enjoyed school and learned new things easily. She also stated that, “I was frequently compared to my two older sisters who had some of the same teachers before me.” Memories are vague due to the fact that she and her family moved often as a result of his position in the Methodist ministry.

Michelle was a member of the National Honor’s Society and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in high school. She graduated from East Forsyth High in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1982. She was third in her graduating class of approximately six hundred and fifty students. She declared Nursing as her major when she was first admitted to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This was largely a result of

encouragement and coaxing by her older sister. Later, she changed her major during her sophomore year because she said, “I couldn’t even give my dad his allergy shots.” She graduated from UNC in 1986 with a 4.00 grade point average. This past December she completed a Masters degree in Technology. She smiled as she reported to me that she held a 4.0 in each and every graduate course. “I will probably go back to school for a post graduate degree at some point. I may consider getting my Specialist degree. But right now I need a break. It was really hard on my family going to school at night and sometimes being away on weekends. My husband works in educational administration at local university and has to travel quite a bit. It was hard on all of us when I was away for classes.”

Michelle began her teaching career in North Carolina where she taught for only a year before moving to Savannah with her husband. Today, Michelle works as a resource teacher and the Web Master at the top performing elementary school in the Savannah-Chatham County public school system. She serves her school as a nineteen year veteran teacher often acting as a mentor or consultant to colleagues. The increase she received in her salary after completing her Master’s degree has allowed her family to purchase a vacation home recently in the North Carolina Mountains. She was able to set aside the initial down payment and have since then registered the property with a vacation rental management company which books the property as a rental unit on all dates except those blacked out by Michelle and her family. She is excited to be able to provide this additional resource to her family’s assets in addition to providing them with a fun vacation property. She currently works with students in a small group setting for

remediation in both reading and math. Michelle is a very well respected educator and doting Mother of two beautiful children.

Personal Profile of Elizabeth “Liz” Kenney

Liz Kenney (pseudonym), a former fashion model stands just shy of six feet tall. Having light strawberry-blonde hair and quite bosomy she walks with an air of self confidence that is unmistakable. Today she works as a commercial insurance account manager for one of Savannah’s leading commercial and residential insurance agencies. She has worked for this same company for a little more than ten years. This firm is only her second appointment since graduating from college. Secure in her professional position, she enjoys working for the owner of the company very much and is consulted often by prospective customers that need the reassurance of a trusting insurance agent. She states, that her boss treats her with the utmost professional respect and that it makes her feel like, “A valuable asset to the company.” He consults her often on various aspects of the business and depends on her expertise and guidance when other agents have questions about specific products or the industry.

Liz grew up in one of the historic island community neighborhoods just outside of the city limits of Savannah, Georgia. She was raised by a single mother in a middle class family. Her parents were divorced when she was just five years old. Living with her mother fulltime, she spent frequents and alternate holidays with her father and stepmother. She and her younger brother both received a private school education and states that, “My mother had to work two jobs one as the dean of students at Drakes Junior College, and taught classes at night. “There was never a question whether or not I was going to college, say even if I wanted to be a hair dresser my mother always told me that

was fine, but I would be the most educated hair dresser in Savannah, Georgia because you're going to college first. She made it clear that I had to do that after I completed a college degree. It was not even an option, even from birth. While my mother had a college degree, she went back to college again later when I was young to get her CPA license because she wanted to make more money. She said, 'You will never have to depend on a man if you get a college degree' she told me." She also worked as a part time book keeper in the evenings in order to insure us that our education was the best that she could provide."

Liz described herself as, "Blonde, no teeth, and freckled faced, and tall" at aged six. At sixteen, she said, "Um...huge boobs, much taller, huge feet, still blonde hair, still freckles, and still no teeth! I had really bad teeth and I was never going to grow teeth that looked decent." She explained that dental problems had left her teeth somewhat impaired from even growing in and once they did come in she was so disfigured that she needed extensive cosmetic dentistry back then long before it was a popular thing to acquire. Later in her teen years she began dying her hair blonde because she was in college and didn't have the time to spend long summer days at the beach to get that bleached-out appearance. She explained that her hair had begun to darken and her complexion was so fair that she felt that she looked "washed out." At twenty-six she was married and said, "I had great teeth. Finally, I had begun going to a salon to have my hair properly colored rather than doing it myself because I couldn't afford to go to a salon. My hair was this nasty all over yellow color that just looked hideous! It had begun to darken as I grew older and didn't have the natural highlights of my youth. It didn't look like it used to when I was younger. And uh, it made my face look brighter to uh high light it. It makes

you look younger to have sun streaks in your hair, and I like in the south, so it just looked more natural on my coloring to have lighter hair.”

Liz was educated in private schools each and every year from kindergarten through twelfth grade. She reported to me that she absolutely hated school until she was in the fifth grade. She said, “I think I had some really bad teachers in school.” While she remembers having difficulty mastering the concept of long division, she also remembers that it was her fifth grade teacher who was the first educator to be especially encouraging and patient and as she struggled to master advanced mathematical skills. “I think this was the first decent educator I ever had. It completely changed my outlook on school.” She explained that it was about that time and as she made the transition into middle school that she began to notice the positive feedback she received from making good grades.”From then on out I did whatever I could to get the best grades possible. Like I wasn’t overly athletic, and I wasn’t, um I’m not an overly bright person, but I can study. I can study my little hinny off. And you know I was a tall, freckled kinda geeky person that really didn’t go out and do anything; so I studied. So I figured that out fast.” In high school she continued to excel academically. “I was valedictorian of my eighth grade class at St. Paul’s and was valedictorian of my senior class in high school. In high school I was also president of the Beta club, editor of the year book, voted most likely to succeed.”

Liz began her college education at the University of North Florida and later transferred to and then graduated from the University of Georgia with a bachelor of business administration degree in 1996. Her overall GPA was over a 3.5. She thoughtfully explained that she knew from her early teens that she wanted to study some type of business and to have an office job upon graduation she just wasn’t sure in what

capacity. “I initially wanted to become an accountant like her mother” she told me, but that math had never really been an easy subject for her. “Maybe it was learning all that long division that really discouraged my proficiency in math” she jokingly said.

Upon graduating from the University of Georgia’s *Terry School of Business*, Liz was offered and later accepted an entry level position with a well established insurance company in downtown Savannah, Georgia. She reported to me that the company worked for the most part under “an unofficial” Good ole Boy mentality” where few of the men were college educated and the women were treated like second rate citizens. Most of their client base had been formed from a multi generational “my daddy knows your daddy” kind of basis. She stated that she felt as though she was treated like “arm candy” and not really valued as an important member of the company. She recalls many occasions where she was introduced to clients and business associates as, “Our University of Georgia graduate” but seldom consulted on important agency matters. Liz stated that, “I felt like the senior partners just wanted me to sit up at the front desk and be pretty and poised, yet didn’t trust or value my professional input as relevant towards critical business related decisions.”

She currently works for a gentleman whom she has great admiration and respect for and who treats her with professional trust and regard. Liz continues to enjoy this professional placement and has risen from an entry level employee to an insurance account manager who has an integral position in the company and responsibilities that range from insurance adjustment to supervision of other employees.

Personal profile of Julia Long

Julia Long, M.D. (pseudonym) is a tall, thinly built, sporty looking woman in her mid forties. She is a career obstetrician/gynecologist who seems to have mastered the technique of “having it all.” She is a nineteen year veteran physician, dedicated volunteer at her children’s school, a leader for her daughter’s Brownie troop as well as a den mother for her son’s Cub Scout group. She is happily married to a fellow member of the medical community.

She has two school aged children who both attend the same private school from which she graduated in 1981. She began there in middle school following her family’s move to Savannah from New York. Tradition and a strong commitment to her faith is an important factor in her personal identity.

Born in Los Angeles, California Julia was the first of two children to be born in this middle class two income home. Her mother worked in several professional capacities including that of a realtor, a nurse, and day care provider and in addition cared for she and her brother while her father worked as a professional engineer. Her father, described by Julia as, “Controlling” expected precision from his household. She said, “My father was an absolute control freak, and we really had a hard time as a family because of it. He demanded precision from both my brother and me. The best I can remember is everything had to be done in precision.” She attributed this quest for endless precision to her father’s professional life and the fact that he worked as an aeronautical engineer for most of his career at Gulfstream Aerospace. As a result, she expressed that he expected nothing less than perfection from her in everything that she did. B’s were just not acceptable. Yet she also vividly remembered her father’s dedication and willingness to stay up all night to

help her get an A if needed. He also had a very bad temper. Her mother she added, “Just wanted us to be happy.”

During her elementary school years, Julia boasts about living in the best neighborhood in the whole world, “After school when everyone was finished with their home work we all met up outside, there must have been thirty kids that lived on our street.” She continued in detail to tell me about their activities such as playing basketball or kick ball with pick up type games involving anyone who wanted to play. She said, “There was always somebody to play with.”

Recreational time with her family once they moved down south was frequently spent boating and participating in water sports almost every single weekend. Julia said, “We spent a lot of time in Hilton Head because we would take our boat over and spend time together as a family enjoying the water there.”

After graduating from high school, she attended under graduate always having two possible careers in mind in case plan A didn't work out then she would be prepared for plan B. During her under graduate education she was married, and continued to focus on academics. Her husband owned a construction company in South Georgia and the two commuted whenever they spent time together. This relationship, which was mostly a long distance marriage ended amicably after ten years and their families are still in touch. She met her current husband and father of her two children in the medical community after she had finished medical school. He too had a prior marriage, so the two who were first colleges then became friends eventually decided to marry and build a life together.

Her memory, sparked from various photographs taken throughout her life, reminded her that her physical appearance at six years of age was that of a blonde little

girl who had long hair which was usually worn in a long pony tail in the back. “I was very small,” she said and remembers being what she called “lanky.” She recalled that at sixteen years of age she wore her blonde hair in the feathered back style and layered look made nationally famous by Farrah Fawcett back in the late 1970’s. Julia described her body type during her teen years as athletic which she achieved easily from running five miles each and every day throughout her high school years. “I was very knock-kneed and pigeon toed” she said which was something she worked at diligently to overcome. At twenty six, while still in medical school, she said, “I was in excellent shape I still ran about five miles a day and was extremely tanned, I was still blonde but my hair was shorter now at about shoulder length.”

Today she wears her blonde hair cut very short, highlighted so naturally that it is almost undetectable unless you really look for it. Most people would never notice that it is artificially color enhanced. When asked about her physical appearance at her current age she said, “I am very strong but not especially toned.” When we met for this interview, I found it interesting that she was wearing braces on her teeth. As she smiled, I thought it was a bit humorous and perhaps even free-spirited that a medical doctor was using bright pink rubber bands which just happened to match the floral sundress she was wearing!

When asked about choosing to alter her natural appearance, hair coloring nor her orthodontic braces were ever mentioned. I wondered if her braces then were for cosmetic purposes or had she needed them for other corrective dental reasons. Cosmetic surgery is something that she openly admitted to having done. She said, “I had a brow lift and my eyelids done in 2005. My eye lids were hanging down over my eyes I guess it was just

from fifteen or more years being up all night delivering babies. My eyelids just hung down so much that it was embarrassing to me and that was all that I saw when I looked into the mirror. I looked tired so that's why I decided to have that done."

As she further described her current appearance, one thing that I found interesting and even a tad bit odd was that she seemed overly concerned about the appearance of her hands. She said, "I have very rough hands. Um, my hands have brown spots on the tops and a lot wrinkles and the veins are very prominent." She later described how her appearance had changed over the years by saying, "More wrinkles, stretch marks, spider veins on my legs. My legs have changed a lot! Um, um,.....I am getting a lot of purple blotches on them and I'm just looking older."

Julia attended kindergarten and elementary school in New York. She reported that she loved all of her teachers and that she remembers all of her teachers from the first grade through the fifth grade. She said that making good grades was at the top of the list of her responsibilities as a child when she was growing up. Her father expected nothing less than A's. Learning came easy for her and she always wanted to make her parents proud.

It was while in high school though that she gained the confidence she needed to pave the way for future success. "I had a really great Calculus teacher who was the first to show me that I could pretty much do whatever I wanted" she told me. Julia graduated from Savannah Christian Preparatory School in 1981. She went on to the University of Georgia where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture in 1984. Graduating Summa Cum Laude, she was the recipient of several scholarships and awards during her academic tenure. As a sophomore, she received two academic scholarships

funded by the Gamma Sigma Delta Agricultural Society. She received another scholarship from the same organization as Outstanding Senior in 1985. She also received recognition from the University of Georgia's Zodiac Honor Society as one of the top twelve students based on GPA. In addition, she received the University of Georgia President's Award for Undergraduate Achievement. Julia completed her medical degree in 1989 with an overall 3.6 GPA. The following year in 1990, she was recognized as Intern of the Year at the Medical College of Georgia, OB/GYN. The very next year she was recognized as Junior Resident of the Year, and in 1993 received the Resident Thesis Award. Finally, as a Senior Resident, she received the Senior Resident of the Year Award.

Unlike most pre-med students, whose plan is to teach or work in other fields of biology or chemistry if they aren't accepted into medical school or never complete their residency, Julia had planned on opening a landscaping nursery and wanted to work in the field of agriculture if going to medical school never became a reality. She enjoys gardening and has a real desire to make lawns pretty and full of life.

During her nineteen years of practices, Julia estimates that she has delivered somewhere in the neighborhood of six or seven thousand babies. She specializes in general obstetrics and gynecology, health maintenance for women of all ages, and contraception choices. Today, Julia is serving as president of the Board of Directors for the Georgia OBGYN Society with a membership of approximately 800 physicians. She is currently a sitting board member of the Savannah Christian Preparatory Board of Trustees. Julia is also the President Elect for the Georgia Medical Society for 2008.

One thing that really stood out to me from our interviews is that it is important for Julia to give back to her community at all levels. Since 2000, she has led a lecture and

discussion for fourth and fifth grade girls entitled, “Puberty and What Happens to Your Body.” She also leads a health related seminar entitled, “Sexually Transmitted Disease” for ninth and tenth grade girls at Savannah Christian. Invitations are frequently offered by Julia to Savannah Christian students who are exemplary seniors and wish to shadow her if they are interested in a possible career in medicine. She is also committed to helping others who are already up coming in the field of medicine. She enjoys teaching and mentoring others and from 1993-1998 she worked as an Instructor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and since 1998 as Assistant Professor of OB/GYN for Mercer University. She frequently includes students or medical residents on staff at Memorial in her surgeries. In addition, third and fourth year medical students often rotate in and out of her area for hospital training under her guidance at Memorial Medical in Savannah, Georgia. She has remained active in her personal and social life and is a dedicated mentor to young girls.

Personal Profile of Norah Parker

Standing at approximately five feet five inches tall, Judge Norah Parker (pseudonym) is an outspoken, unmistakably bleached blonde southern belle. She has an out spoken and spirited personality that along with her bellowing laugh would surely make her the life of almost any party. Norah grew up in Wilmington, North Carolina in a middle class home where her mother was a teacher and her father owned and operated a paint and body shop and collision center. A passionate proponent of children’s rights, Norah works as an advocate in our county’s court system as a Juvenile Court Judge in order to protect and promote the well fair of our young children and adolescents.

Born in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the oldest of three girls Norah had two sisters each two years apart. Norah paved the way in her home for her two younger sisters, always being the first to venture out and try new things. Together the three girls grew up singing in their church and at community festivals.

At six years of age she described herself as, “I looked just like my daughter, I had really white-blonde hair and had blue eyes, and I was kinda scrawny.” At sixteen she had what she described as really big, blonde hair, and was really thin. She said, “I weighed about a hundred pounds!” At twenty six she had just finished law school, had just gotten married, and moved to Savannah. She said, “I still had blonde hair, although then I had begun to color it and I weighed about a hundred and ten pounds.” Today she described herself as overweight, and green eyed. She said, “For some reason my eyes have turned more green over the years.” During the past ten years her weight gain has been the most dramatic change in her appearance.

When Norah was just twenty years old her father died from melanoma cancer. As a result, her mother a third grade teacher had to leave her teaching job and run the family’s paint and body shop business. She spoke of loving admiration for her mother when she recalled how her mother was able to keep the business and how she had the strength to continue to support her and her two younger sisters.

Two weeks after graduating from law school she married her husband. They have been married for twelve years. After many years of infertility problems, together they have three children, one son by adoption and the other two are their biological daughters.

Besides her career, she is currently a volunteer for Savannah's Junior League, trained (CASA) Court Appointed Special Advocates for children and sitting board member, and active member of First United Methodist.

Elementary school was for the most part uneventful for Norah. She reported to me that she made good grades, got along well with her peers, and was well liked by educators, but nothing really stood out as memorable. Likewise, middle school progressed on schedule, but with little fan fare or excitement.

When in high school she held the title as the North Carolina Azalea Festival Princess, a scholarship program for seniors in Wilmington, N.C. Later crowned Miss Wilmington, she was second runner up to Miss North Carolina a *Miss America* preliminary scholarship pageant. Singing with her two sisters was a constant extra-curricular activity during most of her school days. She was head cheerleader, head of the dance team, and head of the student government at her school.

Even while still in college, Norah had already begun a collection of honors and awards for the time and energy she spent volunteering and promoting children's programs and organizations. An advocate for the Big Brothers-Big sisters Program, she received a mayor's accommodation award for *Believe In Yourself*, a project she founded for elementary and middle school children who were participants. Her community service was recognized by a County Commissioner's Award, noted by her willingness to serve as president of her sorority Alpha Chi Omega, and a dedicated volunteer for the American Cancer Society. She also held the title as the North Carolina Azalea Festival Princess, a scholarship program which

Norah received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communication from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in 1991 with a 3.70 GPA. She took a year off from academic pursuits and worked in a law firm researching property titles and other real estate topics before attending law school. She traveled, worked with children, and enjoyed singing in talent shows and other venues during this time.

In 1992 Norah moved to Georgia to attend law school. During her time in law school she was showered with even more outstanding honors and awards such as the Georgia Association of Women Lawyers Award for outstanding law student in leadership and academics, developed an outreach program for twenty three counties while counseling patients giving community legal presentations through the AIDs Law program with Georgia Legal Services. As a member of the student Bar Association Georgia Association she was on the executive council as secretary, Chairman of the Community Service organization, Chairman of the Big Brother-Big Sisters Carnival, President of the Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity, member of the Christian Legal Society, and Orientation Leader for incoming students at Mercer Law. She was a volunteer and was also the spokes person and chairman of Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program of Macon.

She graduated in the top third of her class from the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University located in Macon, Georgia in 1995. Even after graduation she continued to serve her fellow classmates by serving as Alumni Class Representative.

Norah began working as a legal assistant even before she graduated from law school. During the summers she was a researcher and spent her time interviewing and corresponding with clients.

Upon graduating from law school and moving to Savannah in 1995, Norah first began practicing law as a prosecuting attorney in the District Attorney's office. She worked various legal appointments in this office for eight years before applying for her current position. Out of twenty one applicants, she was appointed to the bench by six Superior Court Judges. She has been working since 2003 in as her current position as Juvenile Court Judge.

Just last year she created a program called Future Focus for young adolescent girls who have done really well on their probation assignments such as bringing their grades up, and fulfilling their community service. This program allows these girls to apply for donated scholarships. In this program, the girls took an intensive eleven week course learning business etiquette, learning how to prepare a resume and how to sit poised in an interview. They even got to practice these skills at a tea party donated by a local vendor and from these participants one girl was chosen as an overall winner. Judge Parker believes that positive programs like this have the potential to change lives through the positive experience and encouragement.

Guiding Interview Questions

Questions about Personal Identity and Professional Success

1. Can you remember any early experiences of being goal orientated?

Anne:

“The earliest memory I have of being goal orientated has got to be trying to win all the different badges in *Brownies*, the younger division of Girl Scouts of America organization. I remember wanting to have just as many if not maybe more badges than the other girls in my troop. I was motivated by the competitive nature of that challenge.”

Michelle:

“I was usually one of the top in the class. I remember wanting to really pursue some type of gymnastics. I tried baton twirling for a while. I began to take lessons, when I was like in first or maybe it was in the second grade. I remember really liking it and wanting to be good at it. I practiced all the time in the back yard. But then my family moved so I never started back up. I took piano lessons too and didn’t get to finish that because once again my family always had to move. I have always enjoyed learning and even as a child I wanted to learn new things”

Liz:

“Yes, I just wanted to make good grades. As long as I can remember, I knew that my making good grades made my mom happy. I remember liking the positive feedback I received. My brother was always getting into some type of trouble, so I knew this was something I could do. I wasn’t a good athlete, so this was something I could do with little effort. I didn’t have any real talents like piano my mother was never able to pay for piano lessons. So making good grades was kinda my thing! I knew it was something I could do

since I really didn't like sports and really wasn't that active socially and it made me feel good about myself."

Julia:

"I remember I received a star in kindergarten for reciting my ABC's and I fed off of that positive reinforcement I received." Not being goal orientated was never an option in her family she told me on numerous occasions. Receiving less than an A was simply not an option to consider. It was a requirement set into place by her father. "B's were just not acceptable regardless what it took. He was willing to do whatever we need to achieve that" she said.

Norah:

"I think truthfully, I have always been like that. I don't remember a time when I haven't been like that. My mom pushed us, all three of us. She pushed us really hard. She pushed us to do new things, we did a lot of singing, my sisters and I. My uncles had a quartette so when I was like fifth grade and my sister was in third, we were singing in a quartette. We did talent shows and fun stuff like that. I've always been like competitive and stuff like that."

2. Please explain and describe some of the experiences that were contributing factors of your success?

Anne:

"My older sister was two years ahead of me all through school. We had some of the same teachers. She by nature I think is smarter than I. I remember always wanting to do as well as she had done in the same classes. I kind of always felt like we were being compared to one another even if it wasn't intentional. I also always wanted my parents to

be proud of me, especially my dad. I always and I guess I still do want him to be proud of my accomplishments and choices that I make.”

Michelle:

“It would probably be my mother. She was always very supportive, if we needed any help with anything for school, sports, or projects she was always there. Plus my brothers and sisters were all older than, I was the youngest and I always wanted to do as well as they did. I would watch them become success when they tried different things. That probably had a lot to do with my goals too. I kinda always followed in their footsteps. My oldest sibling is nine years older than me and the sibling closest to me is just two years older. So they all were somewhat of role models.”

Liz:

“The fact that my mom was such a strong woman made a huge difference in my determination to be successful at whatever I attempted. I would have to say parental expectations played a tremendous role in the idea to set and work hard in order to obtain my goals. Failure was just not an option. My mother probably expected more out of me than she did my brother because of two reasons. One, she knew I had the potential and the second reason would be because she never wanted me to have to depend on a man, and struggle the way she did.”

Julia:

“Parental expectation, especially from my father was certainly a contributing factor to my becoming goal oriented. My high school Calculus teacher played an important role too.”

Norah:

“I would really have to attribute it to my mom. She wouldn’t let us fail. I remember her she would stay up with us all night if we were having trouble. In high I was involved in so many things and I remember being so tired and my mom just really wouldn’t let us fail. She pushed, and I probably wouldn’t have worked so hard had she not always been there to push us along. My sisters were all busy like that too, and she just prodded us along whenever we need a little extra push. I was always happy to do well if I knew I did my best. It wasn’t that I had to always win, but I had to do the very, very best that I was capable of doing. That was what was important to her and that was what was important to me.”

3. Describe difficult obstacles or adversity you have had to overcome to reach your current level of success.

Anne:

“In high school I remember feeling prettier than I felt smart. Is that an obstacle? Even though I made good grades, I never felt as smart as my sister. I can remember being referred to as the pretty one and she as the smart one. Because my SAT scores were not that great I also had to take a few remedial courses when I first went to college. This put me a little behind schedule, yet I still managed to graduate in four years because I took extra classes during the summer while I was working a part time job. It was a challenge then to have a social life, work, and try to study for classes. It was a challenge then to graduate on time with the rest of my class from Georgia.”

Michelle:

“I probably didn’t do as well as I should have on the SAT but because I was one of the top students in my graduating class that helped when I began to apply for college. My student teaching supervisor told me I was never going to be a good teacher. Those were two obstacles I had to overcome for sure. When my supervisor said that it made me feel really horrible and what made it worse was my roommate was in the class next to me doing her student teaching, with a wonderful teacher who was so supportive and her experience was so different than mine. She gave her all kinds of materials and I could hear all the positive comments she gave my roommate every day. It was just a completely different experience than what I had. That was definitely something I had to get over. It was just not a good experience for me. I felt like she really didn’t care for me, she didn’t give me any support. She didn’t offer any ideas and didn’t want to relinquish the control of the class to me the way she was supposed to have.”

Liz:

“From the very beginning, I think that growing up in a home with a single mom who worked three jobs was a definite hurdle to overcome. My brother was a hoodlum, and my mother was an alcoholic who was institutionalized twice before she got sober. My dad, you know lived in Savannah but was into doing his own thing. I think after he married my mom he married the devil herself and totally got back all the grief he had dished out to my mom. On another very basic level, I guess I had to realize that I was just too smart for the ‘Good Ole Boy Mentality’ of the first insurance firm that I worked for. I guess I just really came to believe that being ambitious and having a college degree from

the University Of Georgia was not good enough for that particular situation. I knew I would have little to no chance of advancement, so I made the decision to move on.”

Julia:

“Other than attending, surviving, and then graduating from medical school,....I can’t really think of anything. Isn’t that enough of a challenge for anyone?”

Norah:

“My father dying was huge. That was really difficult. In hindsight it actually made me do better in school because I was so afraid to fail. It was so traumatizing and I was really worried being the oldest that my mom wasn’t going to be able to make it in the business. It was the first week of my sister’s freshman year and I had to tell her that my dad died. It was a very, very tough time and I was really worried about it. It made me study harder and my grades actually came up. Another big thing that I had to overcome and was really hard was going through all the fertility issues. We did drugs, surgeries, I was artificially inseminated six times, we did in vitro twice and at the time I didn’t know anyone who had adopted so I just went online and started researching, places and references and God had a plan for me!”

4. At what point or age did you choose your current profession?

Anne:

“I chose dental hygiene as my intended major during my first year of college. I thought about teaching for a while too, but at the time there were few part time teaching jobs. I wanted something that would allow me to spend as much time as I could with my own children if ever I had any. My mom was a dental hygienist too, and she was always able to work her schedule around my sister’s and my school schedule. I guess you could

say I wanted the best of both worlds. I wanted to be a stay at home mom at least some of the time, yet I also knew I wanted to be financially independent. I knew I could make a decent living as a hygienist. I guess I was in my late twenties when I decided to open up my preschool. I began investing in real estate just within the last five years or so. I did some research and I knew that I would get a sound return on my monetary investments if I put it in real estate.”

Michelle:

“Well as a child I wanted to be a teacher. My mom was a teacher, but one of my older sisters was a nurse and my parents just thought that I was gonna just do everything that she did. They kinda pushed me in that direction and I started out as a nursing major. I guess it was during my sophomore year that I switched to education because my dad had gotten real sick and I couldn’t even give him his allergy shots. It just really bothered me. I couldn’t even give a shot to an orange! I wanted to work with children, but not as a nurse so I switched over to education. Plus, my roommate was in education so I think she had a positive influence on me too.”

Liz:

“Well I knew in high school that I wanted to go into the business aspect of some sort of career. I didn’t know exactly what that entailed. I just knew I didn’t want to be a writer. I didn’t want to be a teacher. I wanted an office job and I don’t know I did. At first I wanted to be an engineer because I did well in and enjoyed science, but after I took my first science in college I soon found out that I really didn’t know what science was. So that changed really quick. I didn’t really like the idea of memorizing everything to be an attorney or memorizing everything to be a doctor, so a degree in business just seemed to

offer more choices as far as what you could do with it. Insurance has a lot to do with law, in the sense that it has to do with what someone deserves, and what is fair. There are guidelines that are based on the actual policy and not just some guys arguing it out in a court of law. It is really quite simple you go buy what the policy says. So I guess I decided in college, maybe around age 19 or 20, after I had taken a few insurance related courses.”

Julia:

“At aged twelve when I had a viral infection that was really difficult to diagnose. Then I had a horrible experience as a teenager with my physician. I found out later that it didn’t have to be that way. ”

Norah:

“I knew I wanted to become a lawyer in high school, which is very unusual. In college I started working during the summers at law firms. I knew I wanted to be a lawyer but I didn’t know what I wanted to do with it. So I sort of waivered in college a little bit about what I wanted to do. I thought about Broadcast journalism or something but pretty much I stayed the course. Then um... I knew I wanted to be a prosecutor in the D.A’s office when I was I guess it was at the end of college, I was pretty sure that’s what I wanted to do. I just got very fortunate to be able to get that exact job right out of law school. As far as being a judge, was I always interested in children and their well fare, and since I’ve always worked with Big Brothers/Big Sisters I always knew if I was ever a judge that’s what I’d want to do. Through my adoption experience and everything, I kinda feel like God planned it all along for me to work with all these children. I really feel strongly about this. What really weird is, one morning, o.k. I’ve never told anyone

this beforeI was in the bathroom reading one of those *Daily Bread* magazines. You know with devotionals in them? This was several years ago and I just happened to see an article about a juvenile court judge who would go and really touched children and all this stuff and I was like wow, this is so much what I really want to do and THE next day the job I have now became available! Isn't that weird? Now it was another six months before I got the job, but I found out about it the very next day. That doesn't happen very often. Isn't that cool? You know you don't get signs like that like right there in front of your face.

5. Do you feel as though your appearance has aided in any way to your success?

Anne:

“I think in a very general sense it has. I think that a neat and well groomed appearance almost always offers an advantage. I have read several articles in magazines that even talk about people, especially women that have an advantage over women who are less attractive. These articles discussed that a person who is “visually appealing” is the more likely to get a job or advance in a career than a less attractive person. One study even talked about how babies preferred the symmetry of a person’s face over someone with more noticeable asymmetry.”

Michelle:

“No. I would actually say it’s probably been the opposite. I know that at the beginning of each school year I would experience..... I don’t know maybe an attitude or something, but parents would often be somewhat standoffish and I would have to say it was based just on my appearance because they hadn’t even gotten to know me yet or I didn’t even know them.

Liz:

“I think so, maybe at least a little bit. I think fairly attractive people almost always have an advantage to some degree over people who are less appealing to look at. I don’t necessarily think it has helped me in my current job per say, but I also think that people are still surprised that someone can be attractive and have a brain.”

Julia:

“Oh that’s a real hard one. No, I don’t think so. I think the medical field is really based on academics, so no. I’d say no.”

Norah:

“Probably, but I’m not really sure. If appearance didn’t matter, we wouldn’t work so hard to look good for interviews! On the other hand the lack of proper grooming and the appearance of being ‘well kept’ probably has a negative effect. But if I think about it my appearance of not necessarily being pretty or attractive, but just by dressing professionally and looking well groom probably has helped me. So I guess I would have to say yes, my appearance has helped me especially with those older men and attorneys who just say like ‘hey pretty lady’I just smile and go right along with it.”

Questions about Personal Identity and Discrimination

1. Discuss with me any examples of discrimination you have experienced in both your personal life as well as your professional life.

Anne:

“One example from my personal life that stands out especially vividly is when I was car shopping just a few months ago. I, (not my husband) was purchasing an expensive luxury sedan, and I was actually a repeat customer at this particular dealership.

A few days earlier, I had taken my old car in for an appraisal and to test drive the new car. The dealership sales manager happened to be the one handling my sale so I was actually speaking directly with him and not a sales person. Anyway, he gave me a price for my car, quoted me a price for the new car, and offered me a contract that I thought was acceptable. I gave him a check for a thousand dollars, signed the contract, and then shook his hand. Two days later when I arrived to pick up my new car, a sales person greeted me and explained that the sales manager was busy and that he was going to finalize the transaction and not the sales manager. Well, the next thing I knew he was handing me a new contract and tried to tell me that Mr. X was busy with another customer and had asked him to deliver the car. He sent me a message to say that he was sorry that he was so rushed the day before and that there seemed to be a need for them to get a check for \$1500.00 more than had originally been decided upon. I was livid! I told him that we not only had a signed contract, but that I already gave him a check to bind the deal, and reminded him that we also shook hands on it. I told him that I had owned my own business for over a decade and that I had never been treated so rudely. I further told him that it was his error and not mine if he quoted me an appraisal too high on my car but that a deal was a deal. I was not giving him any more money. I handed him the keys to the new car and said I would like for him to go get my used car. Well, about that time the sales manager started recounting his story. He apologized again and again. I told him that just because I was a blonde and a female; it gave him no right to assume that I was so stupid as to not know the protocol of a proper business transaction. I said, I may be blonde but I pay a lot of money to keep my hair this color! I assured him that we could finalize the original deal or that I would be on my way. Well, sugar would have melted in

his mouth. I drove away knowing I had stood up for myself and that I had made it clear about how I expected to be treated. Several days later I got a written apology in the mail from the owner of the dealership.

Another time that really stands out is from my professional life. It was during the first several years that my preschool had opened. My partner and I had prepared a thorough notebook of financials and income report when we went to apply for a moderate business loan in order to expand at a local bank. The banker, with whom we spoke, just happened to be a woman herself had the gall to ask us how we were going to pay the money back if either my partner or I got divorced. I looked at her like she had five heads. I just could not believe it! She of all people should look at our financial reports and not our marriage license. In her defense, I could almost understand her view point if we had not gone in with such complete and detailed records of our business history. Our financial reports clearly showed that we were able to repay the money based on our previous years of success. I doubt it seriously that she would have made that same comment to a man.”

Michelle:

“Well, I think like what I was just talking about earlier, I think that many times I am not taken at face value by others. I even think that they look at my blonde hair and they assume that I am blonde I must not know what I am talking about. I think too that some parents will assume I am much younger than I am and will often ask how many years of experience I have. They are like worried because they think I’m a first year teacher. I also think that we (my siblings and I) were always discriminated against because we were preacher’s kids. People would often assume that just because we were preacher’s kids we were either Goody Two Shoes or Hellyuns. If anyone ever said a

course word around us they would immediately start apologizing. It got to the point once I was in college I didn't tell anybody what my Daddy did. Then I wasn't treated that way. I had one teacher when I was in high school that would always pick on me because I was smart, because I was shy, and because I was a jock. One day in particular I was wearing my letter jacket and he didn't know that I played a sport, and he stopped teaching and right in front of the whole class he asked me what sport I played and I told him softball and he asked what position. I told him left field. Now if you know anything about softball, left field is a pretty important position. You get a lot of action out there. He went like oh yea, left OUT like on the bench! In front of the whole class it embarrassed me to death. I will never forget that. He would also make comments to try to embarrass me he would come over and take my pencil. He would do some of the same things about the Bible on purpose he would make comments that he knew would upset me. I knew then that I wanted to be the type of person that would put confidence in others. It made me stronger and determined, because I wanted to prove him wrong."

Liz:

"My appearance and my age were used as a basis for various forms of discrimination at my first job out of college. I just think it was real difficult for people to get over the fact that I was young, attractive, happened to be blonde, and had a brain! A lot of times I would not be included in meetings in my department or I wouldn't be asked what I thought about things, even though I was the one who was working on the policies all day long. I came up with a spreadsheet one time to consolidate all these accounts we had one time, and they were just like, 'How did you know how to do that kind of stuff?' And I was like, 'I have a degree in insurance you idiot!' It shocked them that I could

come up with something like that. Then they started bringing me along after that like I was like their trophy or something.”

Julia:

“Let me think,.....no I can't remember any. No, no I don't think I have.

Norah:

“I can give you two examples from law school. The very first week of law school I didn't know anybody in the world and I had sorta gotten with a group of guys that were gonna do a study group, and they ...one of them called me and said they didn't want me in their study group anymore because I ‘obviously cared more about other stuff’ and at the time I had run for student government and at the time I was kinda like the skinny blonde girl you know and they just didn't think that you know, this blonde girl that was involved in all these other things like these little pageants and Big Brothers/Big Sisters and all would be committed to their study group. But I am good friends with that guy now and about six months after I first met them, and ah we got our grades and I was back in that study group they are all my good friends now. Another example was about a guy I actually dated in law school. He said that I didn't need to be involved in so many other things around campus and all that kinda stuff and that I should really focus more on my grades. He asked me why I was even in law school and accused me of just wanting to marry well and go to law school so I could find a husband for a lawyer. Even after I became a lawyer I was just amazed at how often a lot of these old guys around here was like they would put their arm around me and say ‘now come here little lady this is what you're gonna do and we're gonna work this out’ and try to be all sweet and everything. I would say, ah no I'm not gonna dismiss the case. I think it was because I was young and

blonde and a size two that they thought I was gonna settle a case just because! And they just assumed they could push me around because I was young, and blonde and a female. I really feel strongly about that. I really think that this is something I've had to overcome. I've had other young lawyers tell me this too, and for some reason more so blondes. I don't know maybe it's because they just look flighty or something. It's an assumption that's made and you just have to prove yourself."

2. Do you believe any of these discriminations were because of your gender?

Anne:

"I definitely think two of the examples I gave earlier were because of my gender. I can't imagine the banker nor the sales manager at the car dealership for that matter trying those same things on men."

Michelle:

"Definitely. I think the teacher in high school I was just talking about did this because he would treat the male athletes in our class totally different. Then there was this man in most all of my master's classes who would always tell dumb blonde jokes. And they would obviously be about women too. I know that they were aimed at me because I was the only blonde in the class. So I told him one day that I really didn't like to hear blonde jokes that they were really offensive to me. He didn't care he just kept telling blonde jokes all the time. Finally I couldn't take it any more so I just looked at him one day and I said, 'Can you say 4.0?' cause I knew he didn't have one. But he still didn't stop. He would never pay attention in class. He would always lean over to me and ask me questions because he wasn't paying attention."

Liz:

“I think gender and appearance. It’s hard to distinguish the difference when you’re talking about me. I mean who knows, that’s all that I worked with, that’s all that worked there, and that’s why I quit. ”

Julia:

“Again, I’d say no. I haven’t had any experience like that.”

Norah:

“It is hard for me to separate. But maybe it’s a combination, probably mostly gender and being young. Maybe it’s like that with all new lawyers male and female, but I really felt like it was because I was female, especially from the older men. They expected me to be a certain way and they were shocked when I wasn’t. They didn’t expect me to be hardnosed and be able to stand my ground and be able to fight with them on the hard stuff in the legal arena. For me to treat them as my equal is what I think was shocking to them. I think they expected me to be otherwise. I deliberately looked them in the eye and shook their hand with confidence. I think that gets back to the ‘fake it until you make it’ sorta thing. I acted like I knew what I was doing even if I didn’t.”

3. Do you feel as though you have ever been discriminated against because of your appearance? If so please explain.

Anne:

“Yes, I think because I am an attractive, blonde, female men especially assume that I am unintelligent or somehow weak minded. I am not sure why, that’s just the way I feel. Like the sales manager at the dealership for instance, I just don’t think he expected me to stand up for myself, it’s like he thought I was going to accept what he said and fork

over some more money just because I could. I think my appearance led him to believe I had money to burn, and I wouldn't fuss about another \$1500.00 when I was buying an eighty-five thousand dollar car.

Michelle:

“Well the examples I just gave you were definitely because of my appearance, and you know that guy I was just talking about in my master's classes? I think he just hated blonde women because one night in class we had to draw a picture of a monster and his monster was a woman that had blonde hair. I think his ex-wife must have been blonde, and after their divorce maybe his life got really hard. Another example is when I first moved to Savannah. I was given apposition at Hodge Elementary. It is in an inner city school, consisting of mostly minority students. Well one day a parent went to the office and accused me of being prejudiced, he made generalizations about me based on my race.”

Liz:

“Yes, I do.”

Julia:

“No, again I think the medical field is different. Academics are looked at first and foremost. Many times resumes don't include pictures, so there would be no way to tell.”

Norah:

“Yes, because I looked young, I was female, and because I was blonde.”

4. Based on your memories, have these examples of discrimination come more from men or women?

Anne:

“Probably more so from men, but the only two examples I have talked about were from men and women. I probably just expect them more from men, and am even a little more offended when they come from women. Especially in our generation, you would think women our age would be more sensitive about the subject. They probably don’t even realize that they do it. It’s just ingrained in our culture so much that it become acceptable.”

Michelle:

“Men.

Liz:

“Men. Yea, yea.

Julia:

“Neither.”

Norah:

“Definitely men, especially older men.”

5. Have you experienced stereotyping or profiling from other people?

Anne:

“The car dealership situation I shared earlier is a perfect example. Yes. While I really think that it is human nature to size other people up, and it is done a lot in our society, I don’t think it is right to do so. Not that it is right. I am just saying I think we all do it from time to time whether conscience or not. I think the car dealership was sizing me up like all other women, who may or may not be financially dependent on a man. I wouldn’t think that many women come in to buy cars like that. I would suspect that most

people buying a car that expensive are men because in general men make more money than women. I also think they assumed I would not be able to stand up against their request for more money because I was a woman and I believe they looked at me as weak minded.”

Michelle:

“I definitely think that I was stereotyped as a child as a Preacher’s kid. Unfortunately, I pretty much lived up to those generalizations. I was a ‘Goody Two Shoes’ from for sure.

“Yes those would be my car dealer’s stories. Every time we shop for a new car, the sales person always assumes I am incompetent because comments are made like ‘Even Michelle can adjust the headlight or change this fuse.’”

Liz:

“Oh, sure. I think that the first firm I talked about was a perfect example. I also experienced discrimination too in the modeling field believe it or not. On a few occasions I didn’t get jobs because I was blonde. I was modeling in the late eighties, early nineties during a time when the exotic look was in. I was told on more than one occasion, that I looked too much like the girl next door. I was told I was ‘just a blonde.’”

Julia:

“Well, maybe I have been labeled by my medical partners as a “fixer” or someone who likes things to be just so.”

Norah:

“Yes, that’s why I don’t tell anybody about my pageant stuff. Nobody knows that and this is why, because there’s a really strong stereotype about girls in pageants and I’ve

never wanted that stereotype. People don't see the positive roles that they can play and the hard work that contestants must put forth. I really learned a lot, it helped me a lot in interviews and all. I had never been in a panel type interview except in the pageants and I sorta knew what to do because of all the pageant stuff."

6. How do you feel about these generalizations? Do you think they are warranted?

Anne:

"Well, I think they are unfair, and unjustified. The only way they could be warranted at all would be the status quo. That's the way it's always been, so that probably the way it's always gonna be. Men are for the most part going to remain more powerful than woman, although we do have our first Speaker of the House. What's her name? Senator Pelosi?"

Michelle:

"I think these generalizations make me feel defensive. For instance when I played on a co-ed. softball team, I was always put in the field, which is where I wanted to be but then when a ball was hit over there to me, one of the men would always run over there to it and I wouldn't even get a chance to catch it right in front of me. I would get upset with them and I would tell them about it. It's like they didn't think I could catch the ball just because I was a woman."

Liz:

"It made me more determined to succeed. They were certainly not warranted and they just made me more determine to prove them wrong."

Julia:

“I probably am a type A personality and I guess it is obvious. I always want things a certain way, like I need to fix things and make everything better”

Norah:

“Well yes, I think there is probably some truth to the stereotype, but that doesn’t mean that the stereotype is true across the board. There is a lot of pettiness from contestants and parents ...especially mothers of contestants and I think that is a stereotypical image, but I have also seen it to be true in some cases. From a positive side, I don’t think the stereotypes are necessarily true because unless you have been involved in pageants and stuff like that you wouldn’t know the hard work involved. There are some strange folks in the pageant industry they are really odd you have to wonder why the adults are so interested in them.”

7. What are some of the factors that you believe contribute to these generalizations?

Anne:

“I think a lot of these generalizations come from what we see around us. Like I remember being in elementary school and reading *Fun with Dick and Jane*. Their mother was always pictured with an apron on in the kitchen. Dad always had a briefcase and was pictured driving up from work. Now our own children’s illustrations are more modern and a bit more realistic, they do show women police officers and African-Americans in professional contexts. But then look at all the women who are making all the rest of us look bad. I mean Britney Spears and all the head shaving media coverage. MTV can also be credited to some of these negative images. My son thinks in order to become famous you have to wear a lot of gold chains.”

Michelle:

“The fact that I am a female and the fact that I have blonde hair. That is all I can say.”

Liz:

“It’s like there is this Pamela Anderson bimbo syndrome. I have always dressed so traditional and made special efforts to dress modestly, yet people think, especially men that because I am well endowed, I don’t have a brain. Plus, I have blonde hair too, so it is like a judgment is made about my intelligence before someone ever even knows me. I mean you look around and all you see are those young Hollywood stars and all the poor decisions they make. It is a judgment umbrella people cast over us all. Can you get any more peroxide than Pamela Anderson? It’s like that is what these women want to sell. Look at Paris Hilton,..bimbo heiress. All people remember is these dingy people, like Paris Hilton she might be an intelligent person but she plays up the dumb blonde image and then makes millions doing so.”

Julia:

“Probably my own hysteria!

But in a general sense I think that images seen on television and all over society tend to make these generalizations of others stick in people’s minds. Young girls today are bombarded with inappropriate images of people like Britney Spears and Mary Kate and Ashley Olson. Negative images say in the media like offensive dancing and how they dress. They portray women in a negative way. Yet I don’t think most women are like that. They are smart.”

Norah:

“Maybe from the media and a bad public image. I also think that some of it is because I am young, and because I am female. When you come young into a new profession you are somewhat inexperienced and I think maybe some of it comes natural. I also say that it is still more difficult for women. It is very, very difficult for women to be successful in their careers and be a successful parent and that the juggling that women have to do is so much greater than what men would ever think about having to do. I have a wonderful husband who does half of everything but I am the one that has the pressure to make sure that the kids have everything they need for school, and the shoes, and just everything. He cleans up, and does all the laundry and still does have of everything, but I still think that his work is still his main job and I have my work and my family and everything else. Hopefully it’s changing over time.”

8. What are some factors that you believe have contributed to your own perception of your personal identity?

Anne:

“It would probably have to be parental expectation. I think my parents always expected me to be successful in whatever field I chose. I think as a result it always made me try harder too because I didn’t want to disappoint them. I also think that the power of positive thinking helps a lot. I remember in college thinking ‘I will make a good grade on this test so many times that I began to believe it myself’ I always thought I would become successful, so I am!”

Michelle:

“Well, I think one of the reasons I wanted to get my master’s was because I wanted to prove that I do have a lot of intelligence. That would be a part of it of course another reason was monetary. Teachers in the public school system do get a substantial raise for higher degrees. And I guess I would work extra hard sometime like at softball practice just so I could show them that I could run, and I could catch a ball. Um,.. another reason is cause a couple of years ago I had a student and his dad was rather arrogant and he walked in and was asking me a lot of personal questions. And one of the questions was, ‘well where did you get your master’s.’ Well, at the time I didn’t have a master’s. But I told him that my undergrad was from Chapel Hill. I could tell right away that he was thinking that oh boy we don’t want our child in her class.”

Liz:

“I think a very strong independent woman who does not have to depend on anyone, um ...who doesn’t like to show her emotions, someone who has a lot of strong women around her. My grandmother was a totally strong woman too. She went through college back when it wasn’t common for women to go to college. She taught school forever, and did her own thing. So I have the whole history of strong women in my family and they all served as role models.”

Julia:

“My father’s expectations and Ms. Ledford, my high school math Calculus teacher both have a lot to do with how I feel about myself.”

Norah:

“I think that I had very supportive parents. I had two parents that were very supportive, and that was very helpful and I had a good relationship with my father. So it’s been easier for me having two parents than for those who just had one. Even though my dad died very early, until I was twenty I had my dad. So I think that has helped me a lot in my identity. I don’t have weird perceptions of family like I think a lot of the kids I deal with do. My mom is just amazing and she was the youngest of five children and the only girl. She was really frustrated that her brothers always treated her like you know Linda smile and be pretty. She never liked that and was very frustrated by that her whole life. So she preached about this to us and taught us that we could be anything we wanted to be if we just worked hard enough. We could be anything we wanted to be. If there is anything that has helped form my identity, if I had to choose one thing it would be my mom! I heard something on NPR radio the other day, and they posed a question. The question was what is the one thing that you know? If I had to say the one thing that I know, the one thing that I know is that I am loved. I know that God loves me and my mom always made sure I know that I am loved. Those two things are probably the most important when it comes to what I believe formed my identity.

Journal Entries

What were some of your most memorable educational experiences: during elementary school, middle school, high school, and college?

Anne:

“I remember not liking my first grade teacher very much. I remember all the other students talking about how mean she was. It wasn't to the point where I didn't want to go to school or anything, she just wasn't the warm and fuzzy type like I always wanted in a first grade teacher for my own children. I loved my second grade teacher. I remember really being excited each and every day about going to school. Mrs. Woolsey was her name. I really started liking school that year. It was like a light turned on. I enjoyed the good feelings I had when I did something well in her class. She always made me feel smart. Really, I think she made all of her students feel like that. It was a fun year. That was the same year I collected so many Brownie badges. When I did something well and received recognition, the feeling I had about myself was infectious. I want to try something new to see if I was going to be good at that too.

Middle school was not very memorable. I guess it was just such an awkward stage that the only thing I really remember was that I didn't want to be noticed and all my friends felt the same way. I was like we just wanted to blend in. I was an average to above average student and so were my friends. The one thing I do remember is my mother had gone back to college during this time to get a dental hygiene. She graduated and began working part time during my ninth grade year.

In high school, I remember being encouraged by my parents to make good grades so that I could get into college. This was the late eighties and all of my friends, both boys

and girls talked about going to college. I remember my grades improved with little effort from B's and a few A's to mostly A's and a few B's. My parents just "expected" me to go to college. So I guess I figured that's what I was supposed to do. I thought school was fun, I guess you could say I was fairly popular, and I enjoyed all of my classes.

College was just my job. I didn't work during the school year only during the summers. My parents encouraged me to budget my summer earnings so that I would have spending money throughout the year. I probably remember that more than a lot of things, that and struggling in Biology 101!"

Michelle:

"I enjoyed achieving. It made me feel good about myself when I made good grades. I also liked it when I pleased my parents. I had very supportive teachers throughout my education that always encouraged me to do well at each level. I don't really remember much about specific classes in elementary school. It was hard because once I became adjusted it was always time to move again.

In middle school and high school, I continued to make good grades and was involved in sports, but nothing really stands out as being especially memorable. I also felt very average with the exception of being a PK, you know a preacher's kid.

I really enjoyed my college years. I met some life-long friend with whom I have remained very close. Except for going through the decision making process of changing my major from nursing to education, I think I really just moved along as expected. Again, learning was easy and effortless. By the time my husband and I got engaged, our plan was just to get out so we could start our careers and get married"

Liz:

“I just remember not liking school until after fifth grade. I mean I made good grades but I didn’t particularly like school until fifth grade. My fifth grade teacher was who really made a difference in how I felt about school and the whole educational process. Middle school was more or less uneventful, I remember wanting to make good grades. I really liked high school. I was involved in a lot of different activities and I was a good student. I was valedictorian of my senior class.”

Julia:

“One of my most memorable educational experiences during elementary school was actually was in kindergarten and it is actually one of my earliest memories. Ah, was I got a star for standing up in front of the class and saying my A.B.C’s. correctly and I got this giant star that they pinned to my shirt and uh, I still remember being proud of that. Um, middle school I don’t remember much about any educational experiences. High school, I had a wonderful calculus teacher. I was the star of this A.P. Calculus class and I had a knack for figuring that kinda thing out. In college, again I had a math teacher who took me under his wing and he used to always tell the class that he used to check his work behind mine. He would check his work with mine to make sure he was doing it correctly. I did very well in college and only lost my 4.0 average the very last quarter of my senior year. It was absolutely devastating to me. It blew my mind, it was the first B I had ever made. I did not handle it well at all. It was also the *best* educational experience for me because it also prepared me for Medical School which was so incredibly hard that after one semester I was praying for B’s.

Norah:

“I moved when I was in third grade, so it was really tough moving into a new school and not knowing anybody. I remember not feeling confident. Here’s an example. I was always in the gifted classes when I was growing up and I always did well with school. Yet I never felt like I was the smartest one, I was always very self-conscious, I would answer in class. I knew I was o.k. but I never felt like I was really smart. If you think about identity though it’s interesting, I didn’t ever feel like the smartest one, I was always very nervous with testing, and I was always afraid I would fail. I always felt more confident about the way I looked, than how smart I was. My sister always knew she was the smartest one in the room, and always felt like she was the ugliest. As we’ve gotten older, I have focused all on my career and not on my appearance. She has focused on her appearance although she has her PhD and her MBA and teaches at Emory. She is exercising, and decked, and beautiful and thin and here I am you know fat and don’t care about my appearance but I care about my job and my intellect. I wanted approval for my intelligence. Does that make sense?”

If you attended graduate school and/ or post graduate school please discuss factors that led you to that level of educational attainment.

Anne:

“I did not go to graduate school. I only have a four year degree. That was all I needed to become a registered dental hygienist. But really I got more than what was required at the time. Some colleges offered an Associate’s Degree in Dental Hygiene.” I remember my advisor telling me the only difference was that I would have the credentials to teach dental hygiene if ever I decided to do that one day.

Michelle:

“I just wanted to fulfill that personal goal. And also, I felt like I needed to prove myself and gain more respect from my student’s parents. While I really don’t feel any smarter than I was before I got a Master’s degree, I believe I get more respect from the parents of my students just because of the credentials.”

Liz:

“I didn’t go to graduate school. Now that I only work part time because I want to be available for my daughter, who is only seven, it really wouldn’t make much difference in my career at this point anyway.”

Julia:

“It was just always ways expected that my brother and I would go to college and beyond. The expectations from our parents were the same for both of us”

Norah:

“I just knew I would go on or have to go on if I wanted to go to law school. I just knew that was what I wanted to do.”

Were there any teachers with whom you had a special connection? How do you think this impacted your success?

Anne:

“It would definitely have to be my second grade teacher Mrs. Woolsey. She always said the sweetest things to me in addition to all of her other students. I remember feeling almost invincible. We would do these cool science experiments and she even had little white lab coats for us to wear. I remember feeling like a real scientist, a smart scientist at that. Looking back on it now I think she was probably very influential in

where I am today. I just remember first recognizing that feeling of success in her class. I like the way it felt and I want it more.”

Michelle:

“The teacher I remember the most was my fourth grade teacher. She was young and that year was her first year teaching. She was married but didn’t have any children of her own. She used to let the girls in the class do special things with her when her husband was away on business. Sometimes she would take them for ice-cream or maybe bowling. I remember when it was my turn thinking that was so awesome! It made me feel really special. I always wanted to do well in her class because she made learning fun. Maybe it was because she was so young, I don’t know but it made me feel really special.

Liz:

“My favorite teacher ever was my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Roberts, she was just nice! You know, fifth grade math was just hard for you know back when we learned long division without a calculator. It blew my mind. She was very patient teaching me when she knew I had a particularly difficult time with it. I was closest probably with one of my teachers in high school. She was the advisor for the yearbook. She was also the editor of the school news paper and she was my English teacher.”

Julia:

“My calculus teacher in high school, Shelia Ledford. She was a heavy woman and she was angry all the time and she was always screaming. I was always extremely frightened of her all the way through high school until I had her. That calculus class was the first time I had her and I just had a knack for figuring those sorts of problems out and she gave me harder and harder tests. She was totally different than I expected. If she

knew you were trying your best that was what was important to her. My dad would stay up all night with me and we would figure these problems out together. We got very close doing that. Mrs. Ledford was the one who by pushing me in this class made me realize that I could do just about anything I wanted to.”

Norah:

“Not really, I mean I always loved my teachers, but not one in particular really stands out. In high school, no I guess not really. I mean I was always in AP classes and I always did well one just really doesn’t stand out to be amazing. In college, I would say the same thing. Now in law school that was different, I had some folks that made a big difference in my career path and helping me. There was a professor that worked on that AIDS Law that I told you about and we were the first group that ever worked on the practicum end of that project. I mean we were at the end of our third year so we were able to practice law under his direction, with the AIDS patients and he gave me the confidence to really get in there and do it cause that was a really scary thing for me to do.....to get in there and actually do it. But working with those patients and under his direction it really built up my confidence to really get in there to actually do it. Working with the student government, I had some really good mentors in law school that were, the Deans, and the other people I worked with were really good mentors. One was a former prosecutor, he was one of my professors in law school and he was really good and he sort of reinforced that that was my favorite class and that was what I wanted to do when I got out.”

Discuss your career choices, how they came about and what your feelings are about where you are now.

Anne:

“I guess I decided when I was a teenager. Well, I wanted to be a hygienist because I thought the schedule would be conducive for being a working mother. I saw from my mother’s own experience in the profession that it was a career that could easily adapt to scheduling when family demands were needed. I worked for almost ten years as a hygienist and while it was easy work and I enjoyed getting to know my patients, I was really ready for a change. Although I don’t work in the field anymore because of spending time with my sons, my preschool and real estate investments responsibilities, I do keep my license current so that I will always have that option if ever I decide to go back into it.”

Michelle:

“At first I wanted to be a nurse. I just knew I wanted to do something that involved children. I think I remember knowing that from a very early age. But when I was in college and realized I didn’t like the sight of blood I knew I needed to make a change. I am sure my roommate was more influential in that decision than I realized at the time. I really like what I do. I have enjoyed being able to bring both of my children to school with me where I work. I think it has been a good career choice.”

Liz:

“Well I thought I was going to be an accountant because both of my parents were accountants, and I did great in my first accounting class. It was not only hard, but tedious. My mom would always say it’s not math it’s logic! And I would be like, there’s a lot of numbers, its math Mom. So I started taking Accounting II and it was awful and everybody was failing it and I didn’t like it at all. I hated it. My mother said that they were just trying to weed us out to see who was seriously interested in that major. So I told her, ‘O.K. I’m weeded out.’ Then one of my Business Law classes, like a requirement for the business degree, was really, really interesting and I had this really good teacher who um, who ended up teaching like Insurance 101 which is another kind of Business elective that you can take. It was so good and he made it so interesting, that I took another insurance class and it just kinda made sense. He was just one of those brilliant people who was only in his late twenties, yet already had like nine different degrees. He was funny and would pose real life type discussions in class and just made it real interesting. He steered me towards the insurance industry for my major. It was actually another guy, Rob Hoyt, who was a good speaker and who gets written up to this day in all these insurance magazines, because he’s just one of those insurance geek kinda people who led me to the major. He may even be the head of the department now.”

Julia:

“I knew that I wanted to go into OBGYN since I was about twelve. Um, I had a, uh infection that ah, it was a virus that affected my eyes and genital region. The doctors, um absolutely couldn’t figure it out. I went from doctor to doctor. I lost about a month of school, soaking in tubs and not being able to see very well because of this virus. When I got better and I got a little older and I guess I was in about the ninth grade or so, I spent

some time in the library looking up these viruses and after about an hour or so came up with a very nice article about *adenovirus* that affected the eyes and genitals and I remember thinking that I uh, was smart enough to figure that out and take care of people. I wanted to help somebody who had the same thing that I did. They didn't know what it was, and I found it in close to an hour. I was very, very upset about it and I wanted to help girls my age not go through what I had gone through which was particularly harrowing. And then several things happened to me later in my life that I um, just reinforced my decision. I um, had a scare with a pregnancy when I was about eighteen and I thought I was pregnant and I went to a doctor here in Savannah and he told me that I was pregnant and I spent the next two weeks um completely devastated and I didn't know what to do. Um, thought about killing myself several times ah because my father would never tolerate this and I didn't know what I was gonna do. I had already planned on going to medical school and ah, this was gonna ruin it. I got my period at the end of the two weeks and I went in to see the doctor and I told him I wasn't pregnant and he said, 'I knew that. I was just trying to teach you a lesson.' Well I uh, my goal then was to save the women of Savannah. Not just little girls who had a virus in their eyes, but I was gonna save the women of Savannah from this monster.

My first pelvic exam was incredibly rough and um, a little forceful. I remember being upset for days, my mother told me a little bit about what was going to happen before the exam. He never even explained anything and was extremely rough and gruff. When I was in college, I had a wonderful OBGYN who was very kind and very gentle and I realized that um, it didn't have to be a frightening experience and I um, I wanted to be like this guy that was in Athens that I had gone to.

Norah:

“I knew I wanted to go to law school, but I had never really thought back then about being a judge. That just kinda happened. I enjoyed working for the benefit of children and after I saw that article I told you about, it made me know that was what I wanted to do. I love my job. I absolutely love my job. I am very, very happy I feel like I am making a difference in children’s lives, I can be creative about the program I can create that will help change children’s lives.

Tell me about any extra-curricular activities including academic organizations, sports, sorority affiliation etc.

Anne:

“I was in BETA Club in middle school but not in high school. I was never particularly athletic so I wasn’t involved in any organized sports like cheer leading or basketball or anything. I was not in a sorority during college.”

Michelle:

“I was in the National Honor Society in high school and was also a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I was chosen to be a Junior Marshal the year I was a junior at the graduation ceremony. It was a real honor because they only chose the students with the ten highest GPAs. I was third in my class. That was a real honor.”

Liz:

“I was a member of the Junior BETA Club in middle school and the BETA Club in high school. I was a basketball cheerleader in middle school so I got to go to a lot of basketball games and things like that. In high school I was on the track team, I was valedictorian as I told you before and also voted ‘most likely to succeed by my fellow

classmates.’ I was a member of a traveling modeling troop during my last two years of high school. We went to New York and many of our girls were offered modeling contracts. While in college I was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority.”

Julia:

“I remember enjoying school tremendously. I remember having a lot of friends. As far as an extra-curricular activity, I guess I didn’t have one in elementary school but we lived on a block that had, it was a dead end block and it had thirty children on it. So we always had somebody to play with. Um, it was the greatest street in the world as far as I remember, because everybody always come out after school and we always played kickball or baseball or whatever.

Middle school, I had moved to Savannah and I mainly stayed around four girls and who we are all still friends to this day. Um, I just don’t remember a social life at that time I just remember coming home and playing more than anything. I played basketball for the island’s YMCA and we were always practicing basketball after school.

In high school, I um played one year of basketball and softball for the high school team. Then I started dating then after the second year so I didn’t do the sports any more after that. I pretty much dated all through high school. I never really became ‘bookish’ until I got into that calculus class. I am pretty sure that was as a senior. I realized that I had to make all A’s if I wanted to graduate with honors. So my senior year I went into a panic mode and ended up graduating with honors.

I would say I was fairly outgoing in high school. I had some really great, great friends two friends that were men who remain to this day my closest friend and then those same four girls pretty much remain my social group.

My extra-curricular activities were sports, running specifically. In fact I used to run before I caught the bus in the mornings before high school, she said proudly.” She continued running as one of her primary hobbies while in college but also picked up riding as a member of a local rodeo club. She enjoyed traveling throughout north Georgia attending various rodeo but told me that besides these two activities, she really didn’t have much time to do much more than study.

Norah:

“I was always very involved in singing and talent shows and stuff like that I was really involved in student government, I played tennis a lot Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Alpha Chi Omega, Head Cheerleader, Capt. Of the Dance team, President of the German Club I did so much.”

Do you think you will ever change professions?

Anne:

“I would like to think I am open for options. I think I have enough on my plate with having three children. I make a nice salary from my school, six figures which is not bad for only putting in about two hours a week on average. Although it was stressful the first few years we were in business it has become quite profitable. At one time the loan on the school was secured from a home equity loan on my house. Now that that is paid for, it is truly a cash flow business. I’ve been thinking about taking a real estate course one day. I have enjoyed buying and selling my own properties, so I think it might be fun to do it for other people one day.”

Michelle:

“If I could find a job making the same salary as I do now working on web sites, I would probably consider it. I would enjoy doing something with technology more than just being the school’s webmaster. I really enjoy learning new technology and computer programs.”

Liz:

“No. I really like it. I am a customer service oriented person. I really enjoy what I do, I love the people I work with, and I enjoy the relationship I have with my boss. He pretty much lets me work flex hours so long as I get my job done. He just gives me a stack of work and he knows I’ll get it done. He doesn’t have to look after me. I have begun mentoring the interns the last few summers as they’ve come to work in our firm. It’s amazing how the last ten years have passed so quickly. It seems like yesterday when I was their age and just starting in the field.”

Julia:

“Only if my mortgages were paid off, and have enough in retirement so that I wouldn’t have to work. I would love to quit work and maybe have my gardening business. That would be my dream.”

Norah:

“I don’t think I will. I think that this is probably what I’ll be doing thirty years from now. It’s a four year appointment so I have to be reappointed every four years.”

Do you still have any personal or professional goals you wish to accomplish?

Anne:

“I would like to become a real estate broker and perhaps own my own real estate company. Investing for my own financial gain is exciting, but I would like to share what I’ve learned with others and be able to see them enjoy their own successful payoffs. Maybe I’ll do that when all of my children are away at college.”

Michelle:

“It would be nice to learn all the contraptions on this new Bow Flex machine I just got so I can use it to work out! You will laugh but I would also like to learn how to French braid my daughter’s hair. Maybe I’ll return to school to obtain my T-6 one day but not right now.”

Liz:

“Um.....probably, but I can’t think of what they are. I’m sure I do, but I don’t have anything really on the forefront of my mind right now. I’d like to lose ten pounds. I’d like to be more active in my church, but I don’t think I have the time to do it. Right now I’m in sort of a dilemma because I don’t want to get too involved in my career so that it takes a way to much time from my family. I am going to have to work out something for this summer because I don’t want to put her in Daycare just so I can go to work. I’d like to build a house maybe one day my husband and I have own several homes but we’ve never built one ourselves. I think it would be fun being able to watch the process of building a home from start to finish. Maybe one day I’ll go back to graduate school and get my MBA but not right now, my daughter is too young.”

Julia:

“Yea, after everything that I have done now, um I would like to NOT work anymore and uh, would like to get set up enough so that I wouldn’t have to work. I would like to um, go back into the nursery business which was my fall back. I don’t know that I would necessarily want the business, I would like to um, I would like to kinda like be a *personal gardener* for people. I would like to have maybe ten clients that I just take care of their yards and give color. So I would like say if you hire me you will have color all year long. I would just make sure they would have flowers that were blooming all the time and do the weeding and that type of thing. I’m not interested in mowing their yards or doing their hedges or anything like that I would simply add color to their yards and making interesting flowerbeds and ah,...exciting flower beds so that people would stop in their cars as they drive by and um that’s what I’d like to do one day.

Norah:

“Oh yea, a lot of personal goals. I mean, I feel like I need to be a better mother and worry about my children more. I am overwhelmed with my life so I am juggling all the time and having too many things to do. I want it all. That is the hardest part of my life. I say this to my best friend all the time. She has been my best friend all growing up and she says that I’ve always been like this. I’ve always had so many things going on at once so I may just need to accept that that is the way I am and stop saying I’m gonna change. I would like to take some painting classes, and a photography class, and I’d love to play more tennis.”

Cross-Case Comparisons

After all the data was recorded and analyzed, several commonalities arose. The themes were easily categorized into the following areas: 1) Self perception and identity as a blonde, 2) Gender identity, 3) affects and recognition of popular culture influence, 4) Parental and educator expectations, 5) Common religious affiliation.

The first interesting commonality that emerged from analyzing the total data collected from my participating subjects was the fact that when asked to describe their own physical appearance they each referred to themselves as a *blonde*. Even at various stages of their lives as young as six years of age they identified themselves as a blonde. Having even mentioned hair color, this told me that being blonde was an important factor from their own self perception of identity.

In *On Blondes* (2003) Joanna Pitman wrote, “Blondeness has become so rich in its own language of symbolism that it has developed far beyond a mere colour. It has become a blazing signal in code, part of a value system laden with moral, social and historical connotations” (p. 3). Still pondering this mystery, later she continues that, “As a brunette, Madonna had been a sultry beauty but as a blonde she was a goddess. That meant more sales, more stardom, and more Power” (p. 258). So this made me wonder why each of the participants even made mention of the adjective *blonde* as they referred to their hair.

Perhaps each of the five participants recognize too the significance of being blonde, or is it that they pointed it out because they were keenly aware of the image presented of blondes in our society? These are questions to which I still have no clear answers, but am personally intrigued by the array of possible answers.

The mystery of bloneness is a complex one that can just as easily be questioned as denied. There is a dark and light side of blonde. As referenced in a prior chapter, there is however quite a bit of literature and information available devoted to topics related to hair color in general and the golden tresses questioned here. In *Blonde Like Me* (2000) Natalia Ilyian discusses this very notion. She said, “People want to step inside symbols that encompass opposites. Such images are deeply satisfying to us because they resolve duality. When you find an image that can mean two opposite things at the same time, you have stumbled upon a powerful symbol that changes people’s lives” (p.130). The image of a blonde I propose in our society does exactly that. It offers a good/ evil meaning stemming from the light hair being associated with purity and the evil or naughty side of the sexpot image from Hollywood. Here, the dark is unknown with various possibilities of sexual overtones and the light is known or considered to be a certainty such as in the case of purity. There are mixed messages present in our society which I believe causes the blonde to be such a prevalent and powerful image. The issue of the light /dark controversy is the most important point to me in this study; one that is not visible at first glance. This is something discussed by Natalia Ilyin (2000) “The truth about blondes that we all agree never to mention, the dark side of blonde that we all repress. Blonde is a racial statement, ‘I am the light people’ it says, not the dark people” (p.138). This idea of discrimination and generalizing, this public persona of “Blondes have more fun” and “light is best”, based on hair color is the core concern I wished to investigate through this study.

Wasn’t it Hitler who thought blondes were the superior human and encouraged young blonde women to procreate and have as many blonde babies as they could? He

thought blondes were the in the light and the only chance to promote purity in our society among beings. This is another good/evil, light /dark connections to hair color.

Further, four of the five women admitted to chemically altering the natural color of their hair. The most common reason among the subjects was their desire to restore the hair color they each had as a child. Anne explained her decision by saying, “I began to frost my hair because after I had my children it began to lose its luster and look dull. I wanted to brighten my face and add some color to what I felt like was my overall beigeness.” Michelle said that, “It gets so dark and dull during the winter, I get it highlighted probably every six to eight weeks during the winter months.” Liz said she began to color her hair because she felt like she looked, “Washed out.” Norah admitted to “dying” her hair but did not specify the reason or ever explain why.

Gender identity was another obvious theme that clearly arose during the analysis of this study. Four of the five participants clearly verbalized some of their personal experiences of discrimination as those from males directing the negative comments to females. Anne, Michelle, Liz, and Norah all shared testimony of specific examples they personally attributed to their gender. Oddly, I thought Anne even gave an example of feeling as though she had been discriminated against by a female banker because she and the business partner of her pre-school were both female. It is obvious as we look at large corporations, educational administration, and or political arena that men are still the majority. I have also observed as I have read various authors, that men are still the standards by which both genders are gauged. Madeline Grumet explains it like this, “Children and the women who bear them have never had the status of men” (1988, p. 62). While it is true, women have more privileges today than ever before, men remain the

dominate gender in power. Michelle shared instances of gender discrimination from a high school teacher, and a classmate in graduate school. On another occasions she felt as though she was being talked down to from a car salesman simply because she was a woman. Norah experienced discrimination she attributed to her gender when she first started law school. The study group of which she was a part was made up of all young men with herself being the only exception. At one point she was even asked not to return to the group because the other members did not consider her as a serious student. In addition, a former boyfriend had accused her of going to law school in order to find a proper husband.

These participant's experiences and concerns with gender discrimination are supported and also expressed by Walker (1998). There she writes, "Women are expected to perform in subordinate or economic, social, and political roles obediently and loyally, if not selflessly. Women are pressed or forced to accept domestic, reproductive, and sexual arrangements set and enforced by male authorities; many of these arrangements offer limited possibilities for individual choice or negotiation of terms, (p. 21). While I must admit there are more women in positions of power today than there were even ten years ago, gender discrimination is still a problem today and I suspect will continue to be in years to come. These participants openly shared their experiences of the problem and that is evidence to me that it still exists.

I found it interesting that Julia said she had not been discriminated against in the medical community because of her gender or appearance. She was confident that the, "medical community was different, that it focused on academics, and not physical appearance or gender." But I wonder if this is truly the case. I consider the fact that

perhaps she is not aware of any difference or perceived difference in her treatment because her point of reference is from a Caucasian perspective. Does she not recognize discriminations of gender or hair color because she is still coming from a position of privilege from whiteness? Delese Wear (1997) discusses the many levels of privilege located within the medical community. She writes, "Most feminist theorizing suggests that it is impossible to speak of 'woman' without also noting her socioeconomic status, her race, her sexual orientation, and where she calls home in the larger world" (p.34). Growing up in a white, middle class world where both parents are college educated I believe sheltered her from the blatant oppression often experienced by those who are less fortunate and of color.

Evidence of negative influences from popular culture was mentioned by each and every participant. Particularly, interesting was that Britney Spears specifically, was mentioned more than any other popular culture icon. In addition four of the five women said that they were personally offended by the negative comments made as dumb blonde jokes. These participants gave me the impression that they held a great deal of this responsibility to the negative images of blondes presented in the media and other popular culture means. The one participant who was not offended and actually said that she thought the jokes were funny was Julia the physician. She said that, "The medical field is really based on academics." She later continued that she thought that the blonde jokes could really be applied to anyone." My concern is confirmed by the fact that all five women mention the negative images permeated in our society because few people realize that the repeated images actually begin to become societal reality. Weaver (2005) writes that, "The impact of popular images is more profound than the written word and more

influential in shaping what people accept as truth” (p.101). Our young female daughters, nieces, and students are at risk of believing these images. As educators we must intercept these negative images and empower our students. “Critical media literacy scholars” Weaver writes, “Suggest that schools should either offer classes that specifically address the many ways in which images influence and construct reality or schools should integrate media literacy into their current curricula” (2005, p.101).

Parental Expectations and the expectations held by educators surfaced as another common theme during this study. Each participant expressed first the extrinsic incentives of motivation that led to their achievement and ultimately paving the way for more intrinsic learning. First Julia mentioned receiving a star that was pinned to her shirt when she correctly recited her ABC’s in kindergarten and later the expectations as outlined by her father. Later, it was her high school math teacher that also held high expectations for her achievement. Michelle spoke about wanting to live up the role models of her older siblings while Liz pointed out that her mother was a strong role model and held high expectations for her because she knew she was capable. It was her fifth grade teacher that gave her the confidence to live up to her mother’s expectations. Anne was motivated by have the desire to live up to the accomplishments of her older sister. Norah said, “My mom pushed us, all three of us really hard. She pushed us to do new things.”

High expectations held by important role models and influential educators are especially important for young girls. To confirm this, Alderman (1999) said that, “Girls tend to underestimate their performance, whereas males tend to overestimate performance.” She continues, “Gender differences in attributions for ability are particularly prevalent in subjects like mathematics” (p.35). While there may be no actual

difference in performance or ability, females more so than males tend to have a lower self expectancy pattern for their ability.

Lastly and probably the most surprising finding was that each of the five women shared a public profession of Christianity as their religious affiliation. This was not really surprising to me since all five women were of Anglo Saxon decent and grew up in the south and there is such a high concentration of active Christians in this region of the country. Given the high population of people in southern regions that hold strong Christian values this was not at all unexpected, but I hadn't really expected religious affiliation to arise through the interview questions I had prepared. One might want to question the extent to which this affiliation had to do with the personal drive and motivation of each individual and the obtained level of success each had acquired.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter provides a detailed summary of the research findings from the careful analysis gleaned from the individual participant interviews and journal entries. The initial interest survey and the broad questions that sparked my interest in this topic are first answered below. In addition, several other commonalities of experiences surfaced as the completed study began to unfold. Through the careful analysis of cross-case comparisons I have uncovered additional thesis findings.

1. **Just where did this notion that blondes are dumb ever come from?** The simple answer is Hollywood and the mass media of advertising. In addition, this is a societal construction stemming from the post World War Two era and the Civil Rights movement combined with the surge of the feminist uprising.

As the film industry surged during the thirties and forties, it became evident the female stars receiving top billing were almost always blondes. Barnaby Conrad (1990) writes that, “The heyday of the Hollywood Blonde began in the 1930’s with Jean Harlow. The wisecracking and humorous Harlow was electrifying to men while inspiring to women. Her onscreen glamour set the standard for females not only in Hollywood but around the world; from then on blondes were perceived differently and watched more closely” (p.17 -18). It was usually a blonde and not a brunette who was cast in roles who portrayed innocent characters, who became helpless victims, or the voluptuous female out to capture a man. These movies focused in on the successful allure of these characters forever imprinting their image of bloneness in our culture.

Joanna Pitman (2003) discusses the power of Hollywood to weave myths and fantasies. She writes that, “America was the ultimate maker of myths, and movies became the effective expression of American culture.” The typical plot she writes, “Hinged on the wildly arousing violation of a beautiful and innocent blonde by a dark beast of massive sexual potency” (p.205). These women portrayed innocent, inexperienced characters which led the audience to believe this was akin to a lack of intelligence or common sense.

The stereotype or simplification of a blonde woman began to emerge during these early years of cinema as these characters or types of characters became more visible. All stereotypes serve to naturalize various relationships of power in society. In *Image and Representation*, Nick Lacey (1998) writes, “The fact that women are often stereotyped as subservient to men – whether as a ‘dumb blonde’ or housewife- legitimizes their inferior position. Blondness may be deemed attractive in British and North American society because of its comparative rarity. A blonde is often thought of as sexually attractive, but why should she be dumb? It is here that this stereotype’s reference to the world takes on ideological overtones. If a woman was sexually attractive and intelligent then there is a likelihood that she would be the dominant partner in any relationship, a role that bourgeois ideology defines as male” (p. 140). Dumbing down these beautiful women then either by Hollywood characters or degrading jokes, makes the dominate male retain his power and at least personal perception of control. “The jokes only make sense” write Rose Weitz “because they reflect commonly held stereotypes” (2004, p. 68).

Further, the advertising industry is responsible at least in part because of the countless images of sultry blondes in various ads or commercials. Capitalizing on the

physical attractiveness and appeal of blonde women, print media began to segway from the popularity of blonde movie mavens who themselves often read the copy lines. These continued images just became ingrained throughout our society. Consumerism expanded the popularity of certain products and so capitalism perpetuated the image even further. Once hair dye became affordable for even the average consumer, more women became blonde. Rose Weitz (2004) writes about this in her book *Rapunzel's Daughters*, “Advertisers continually instruct us that by using their products we can change not only how we look but also who we are” (p.64).

The negative images of blondes continue to multiply even today when young starlets like Britney Spears and Paris Hilton continue to dominate tabloids and news casts by their careless antics and poor decisions. Displays from their actions have even threatened the loss of custody from their children or repetitively throw them into jail causes these negative stereotypes to continue. Their influence on our youth of today is sure to have a negative impact. Weitz (2004) confirms this notion when she wrote, “Madonna and Britney Spears display their bodies in erotic clothes, postures, and hairstyles on the stage, on network television, and on MTV in ways that only prostitutes and exotic dancers would have done twenty years ago” (p. 28).

During my participant interviews several women agreed with this very observation. Anne shared in her interview that she thinks a lot of these generalizations come from what we see around us. She references seeing the images in *Fun with Dick and Jane* as a child and the gender roles that were displayed during that time in history. She further attributes negative images from MTV and Britney Spears on television. Liz talks about Pamela Anderson portraying the “bimbo syndrome” and Paris Hilton is

referred to a “bimbo heiress” Giving her the benefit of the doubt she continues that she (Paris) may be intelligent but that she plays up the image of the dumb blonde. Julia expresses a concern with the images seen on television also. She is concerned that young girls today are bombarded with inappropriate and negative images of Britney Spears, and Mary Kate and Ashley Olson. Norah agreed too that maybe the media and a bad public image were perhaps contributing factors to these negative generalizations.

- 2. Are women with blonde hair less capable of becoming successful in their chosen profession?** Absolutely not. Each of my participants are well established in their chosen fields, and personally feel as though they are well respected by their administrative superiors, their peers, and are financially independent.

The numerous awards and recognitions along with the specific credentials they each have accomplished serve as proof for this data and the answer to this question. When asked about the perception of their intelligence held by others four of the five participants believed that the general public looked upon blondes in a more negative tone than non blondes but that through their own hard work and determined nature they persevered and attained their current level of success. Those that recognized the possible negative overtones their hair color may project, but did not accept it as truth. Linda Martin Alcoff promotes this very idea. She wrote, “To self-identify even by a racial or sexed designation is not merely to accept the sad fact of oppression but to understand one’s relationship to a historical community, to recognize one’s objective social location, and to participate in the negotiation of the meaning and implications of one’s identity” (Alcoff, 2000, p.341). Liz was exercising this negotiation when she knew she would never be promoted in the first agency after graduating from the University of Georgia.

She felt the need to seek employment elsewhere in an environment where her talents would be recognized and she could progress with her career.

- 3. Is there any truth to the preconceived ideas that hair color has anything at all to do with intelligence?** The combined average GPA of my subjects of a 3.7 on a 4.0 scales tells me no. An above average intelligence level can also be assumed based on these grade point averages and the achievement of their various degrees. Further, the fact that three of the five participants hold masters or other advanced degrees, I believe this negates any lack of intelligence or naivety. A doctorate in law and a medical degree are not easily obtained.

Nick Lacey (1998) explains the origin of the negative stereotype that suggests that blondes are short of intellectual skills. He writes, “The media, in its various forms, is one of the main sources of information and it is very likely that it is a crucial influence in stereotyping” (p.138). Stereotyping blondes by standards of Marilyn Monroe or other movie maven constantly repeats this negative image throughout media and advertising. They keep these images in the forefront of the minds and eventually become perceived as reality. “Clearly hair color has nothing to do with intelligence” writes Lacey (p.139). These participant interviews share examples of this type of discrimination while their educational and professional accomplishments further discount the validity of the assumption and stereotype that they may lack intelligence because of their golden locks.

- 4. What makes some women disregard the constant negative images about blonde hair?** Two ideas emerged as a commonality among my subjects. First, the desire to please parents and teachers and the second was to disregard negative stereotypes imposed on them by others including the media.

The overall intention from each participant was to prove others wrong and to live up to what was expected in order to please others. Parental expectations followed by their desire to please were of great importance to each participant. Anne mentioned that following in the shadows of her older sister's footsteps was as important to her as pleasing her parents especially her father. Michelle attributed this desire to her own self knowledge and wanting to prove others like the fellow graduate student mentioned previously wrong. Liz was conscious that her brother often caused her single mother anguish and so she tried to lighten her mother's burdens by making good grades and making her teachers proud. Norah too wanted to please her mother especially after her father died. Fellow law students who questioned her commitment to their study group soon regretted not having any more confidence in her than when they first met. In addition to wanting to please her father because achieving less than excellent grades simply was not an option, having teachers who believed in her made a real difference in Julia's academic path. As a physician she actually said she thought dumb blonde jokes were funny and added that she felt as though they could probably be applied to anyone regardless of hair color. Having faced no real adversity in her challenges of life maybe this gave her the impression she was exempt from the negative assumptions.

- 5. For girls who were born blonde, as their hair becomes darker with age, why do many of them choose to dye their hair?** Three of the five participants interviewed said that since they were born blonde, they wanted to maintain that same color even after their hair began to darken with age. They expressed a dislike to the dullness and lack of shine their hair had began to acquire.

Blonde hair has a strong connection to a youthful image because so many people are born blonde but then their hair darkens with age. Barnaby Conrad (1999) wrote, “Sociologists point out, that many people who are born blonde in childhood grow up to be something else, forever associating the loss of flaxen mops with the loss of youth” (p. 27). This is true to for many women who begin to turn grey. Rose Weitz (2004) states that, “For most childhood blondes this process begins early and continues for years, as their hair first darkens and then greys” (p. 200). As a result of this aging process many women including those I interviewed for this study make the decision to chemically alter the natural color their hair. Most often, they choose a shade close to the one they had as a child. Several of my participants even said that they decided to forgo their natural darker color they acquired with age because it just didn’t look like their selves. They wanted to retain the color of their youth. One participant, Norah admitted to coloring her hair blonde, but never mentioned why. Julia, whose hair is clearly artificially highlighted never mentioned it in any of our discussion nor referred to it in her journal entries.

6. For women who are born brunette or other colors, why do they choose to go blonde?

This question was not directly answered during this research because surprisingly each of the five participants had been born a natural blonde. From my reading though, there was an overwhelming amount of literature that pointed to that idea that many women wanted to try out various identities through their experimentation with hair color.

As coloring one’s hair became more common for the average consumer, many women wanted to change their hair color the way they changed their wardrobe styles. According to one report 51% of women dye their hair and of those women, over 40% choose to go blonde. “The notion that we can change our identity by changing our

appearance” writes Weitz “is deeply rooted in American culture. Advertisers continually instruct us that by using their products we can change not only how we look but who we are” (p.64). Combine this notion with specific sports icons or movie stars and the power to influence the consumer is multiplied. Product endorsement has become as important to the annual income as acting or athletic talent. This is clearly the case if careful consideration is given to print media, internet pop-up ads, as well as product placements in movies and brand logos on clothing.

- 7. How have women fought back these negative perceptions and moved forward despite their public persona?** Parental expectation, and personal drive and ambition were the most common answers. In addition, the desire to fulfill educator’s expectations also arose and equally important.

A desire to prove others wrong further added to the importance of disproving negative perceptions held by others. The participant’s willingness to work hard and remain focused to achieve personal goals of both an academic and a professional nature was another way they fought back the negative images. These five participants I believe were unscathed by the negative comments or negative images they have begun to see yet they recognize the presence and visibility of such. As they reflected on their own experiences, I believe they came to a greater understanding of their own identity and perhaps grew even more secure in who they are. This notion is supported by Wilkerson (2000) as he discusses the notion that, “Accurate interpretation of experiences are those that, through theoretical reflection, provide the most fruitful and long-lasting understanding of one’s own identity” (p. 265). Several participants even added that they thought the negative images were more prevalent today than they were when we were

growing up and so they believe the more important concern should be for our own daughters and their future.

Additional Thesis Findings

Five out of the five of my research participants currently choose to color their hair. While they were each born blonde, as they began to age, their hair began to darken. Becoming a “Bottle Blonde” restored the hair color from their youth.

- Three of the five women are offended by dumb blonde jokes.
- Four of the five women feel as though they have experienced discrimination based on their gender.
- Four of the five women feel as though they have experienced discrimination do to their physical appearance which may include references to their hair color.
- All five of the women said that there are more negative images of women presented on T.V. and other forms of the media than there were when they were growing up.
- All five women are born again Christians and are committed very strongly to their faith.

Limitations of Study

This study is first limited by the lack of difference in class among the participants. Though this was the intent of the researcher it is worth noting that participants from various socio-economic backgrounds might have varied experiences. The small sampling size is another important limitation of this study. Making very broad generalizations of all blonde females was never the intent of the researcher. It is also important to recognize that this study does not in itself generalize all interpretations of the image of the “dumb blonde.” It is not the intent of the researcher to imply that these five research participants can “dispel” any “myth” or generalized the notion of a perceived

and widely publicized stereotype. It is however the intent of the researcher to describe in narrative form the lived experiences of these five women in particular who have willingly shared their narratives that can negate this very common, stereotypical image. These stories tell how each woman has faced specific experiences of discrimination or lack thereof and further describe how each has overcome difficult obstacles and the various generalizations about their intellect and character based on the physical appearance.

Further, the researcher must acknowledge the many naysayers of narrative inquiry as a reliable and respected research methodology. The human tendency to unintentionally edit valuable information as it is transferred from subject to researcher can also become problematic for those readers less comfortable with narrative methodology. Specifically the personal forms of journaling used as data and formed into stories are often questioned by some critiques. They tend to devalue journal and diary entries as dependable evidence of academic research.

An example of this lack of respect or support for diary or autobiographical writings is expressed by Cinthia Gannett (1992) as she brings up concern for others perception of this type of inquiry, she writes, “With connotations such as overly personal, confessional, trivial, and feminine” (p. 21). In great support for her concern although Janet Miller herself uses and trusts such narratives and reliable data, referring to Gannett’s view writes, “Her work points to possible reasons for how and why narrative, autobiography, and forms of teacher-research that utilize these modes of inquiry remain for some as marginal, as secondary among theoretical, analytical, and empirical studies in education” (Miller, 2005, p. 89).

Lastly, this research is limited to participants who are native to the south eastern regions of the United States. Common geography from one specific region, limits a generalized assumption that these findings would be similar in different regions of the country.

Educational Implications

The most important educational implication I present through this study is the need to ignore and discount the negatives images of generalized stereotypes so clearly visible throughout our society. Blondes, males, Asians, or other identity categories can easily become a target. Educators are responsible for making it clear to the students in their care that this is an unacceptable practice and for setting the example by their own actions of acceptance.

The influence of adult conduct both in and outside the classroom can have last effects on students. Smith (1999) refers to this as “pedagogical sensibility.” He writes, “The formal plans and intentions of parents, teachers, childcare workers and so forth, but also those indirect, subliminal, hidden and unconscious moments when children, on the bases of their experience, make interpretive decisions about the reality they share with adults around them” (preface). We should also consider he continues, “The character of responsible parenting, teaching and care. As adults, we inevitably suffer the cultural disease of our time, but then we reproduce them in our children to the degree we have not healed ourselves” (preface). Those negative images presented in various forms of media representations must be ignored and discounted from any assumption of relevance.

Further, positive role models both in an outside of classrooms are necessary for adequate student motivation. According to Alderman (1999) these expectations are,

“Inferences that teachers make about the future academic achievement of students based on what they know about these students now” (p.146). These expectations can have positive or negative effects on the students within our care. As evidenced in this research, positive role models can have a life changing effect on the success of their students.

Conclusion

This research was personal. My thinking has expanded from the tiny bits and pieces of my own experiences to the creation of this work. Going back almost two years ago to the very conception of this topic, and the entrance into this doctoral program three years prior has been personal. While I really had no desire to or ever intend to write about myself or my own experiences, in many ways I have. Through the voice of four women who shared experiences of discrimination and the total of five who shared their hard work, determined spirits, and resilient personalities each have shown me how they have overcome various means of adversity.

Their stories have often mirrored those of my own. It is because of a solid foundation from educational leaders, a family who encouraged me to follow my dreams, and a determined spirit that I am able to sit and write this conclusion. My final words are taken from Pinar (2000) as he discussed the “full-throated song” and his “wish of personal joys to the beginning researcher.” He writes, “Research is a personal venture which, quite aside from its social benefits, is worth doing for its direct contribution to one’s own self-realizations” (p.176). My original goal in this research was to raise social conscience of this form of discrimination, but through it I have met a sense of self reflection and realization completely by surprise. This dissertation helped to unveil the mystery of my own identity. Through it I have come to recognize the multiplicity of my

own evolution and understand more the complex parts that piece together the whole of my being. I have questioned a lot. I have realized a lot, and I have grown a lot.

I am thankful for the theorists who came before me and their willingness to start this open and very complicated conversation. Our personal experiences are invaluable both in and outside the classroom and so too are the experiences of our students. I promote and propose future educators to keep the conversation open and engage in “*currere*” the study of educational experience, (Pinar, 2000, p.400).

Suggestions for a Better Tomorrow

Towards the end of this study, I decided to ask each of the participants one last question. It was important for me to hear their own suggestions about how educators like myself could possibly shelter future girls from these same examples of discrimination and promote positive outcomes in an educational setting. I wanted to hear what they thought would make a positive impact on the motivation of young girls. Below is the final question I posed.

What do you think educators of today need to know that would help in the motivation of young girls?

The answers I received are as follows:

Anne: “Be self sufficient. Always be able to take care of your self. Believe in your self and other people will believe in you too. Be able to stand on your own two feet. Teachers need to encourage them and let those girls know they have options, a lot more today than when we were growing up.”

Michelle: “Make learning challenging. Never assume a student is or incapable because they are male or female. Always allow them to go beyond their comfort zone and try new things.”

Liz: “Making school interesting, using more real life examples of what they are talking about. I don’t think teachers should ever use the old fashioned technique of trying to embarrass a child in front of the class, *especially* little girls.”

Julia: “Never rely on a man to support you! You have to be able to take care of yourself because your options are much more open. In my job of taking care of women one of the things I go through with my patients is divorce. In a very, very personal way my records

are usually brought forth in court. These women tell me everything that has happened. It is usually, 99% of the time it is because the husband left them for another woman, and they are absolutely devastated out of their mind not just because their marriage has ended but because all of a sudden they realize that they have no way of supporting themselves um .. most of them are going back to work after being out of the workforce for a while after raising children. The ones that have their own career are not so devastated and with the divorce rate as high as it is I think that they (young girls) need to be able to take care of them selves. This day and age that they need to be able take care of themselves.”

Norah:

“ Believe in yourself and others will too. It comes back to the ‘fake it til you make it thing’ even you aren’t sure of yourself act like you are. Pretend to be confident and pretty soon you will be!”

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Appendix A

INTEREST SURVEY

I am conducting a survey in order to determine who might be interested in participating in a research study about the construction of women's personal identity and issues of discrimination and stereotyping. If you are interested in participating by even the slightest bit, please answer the questions that follow.

1. Do you believe issues of identity are formed solely by personal opinion?

_____yes _____no

2. Do you believe one's identity is formed at all through media representation?

_____yes _____no

3. Is it your opinion that self-confidence plays any role in the construction of one's identity?

_____yes _____no

4. Do you consider yourself successful?

_____yes _____no

5. Have you accomplished most of the personal goals you set for yourself as a young adult?

_____yes _____no

6. Are there still goals you wish to accomplish

_____yes _____no

7. Do you believe you have ever experienced discrimination as a result of your gender?

_____yes _____no

8. Do you think you have ever experienced discrimination based on your appearance?

_____yes _____no

9. Would you be interested in participating in a study that would uncover some of the questions just asked?

_____yes _____no

10. Would you be willing to spend approximately 5-10 hours in self-reflection and with the researcher to answer some these and other probing questions as they might relate to identity stereotyping?

_____yes _____no

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Name: _____ **DOB** ____/____/____

Please state your highest level of education: _____

**Institution from which your degree/degrees were
obtained:** _____

GPA: (if known) _____ **please provide written documentation if available.**

Please state your current

Profession: _____

How long have you been in this

profession: _____

**Please list any accomplishments or special recognitions you have received from
professional and civic organizations. You may attach additional pages if
necessary.** _____

Please describe your physical appearance at age six, sixteen, twenty- six, and now.

How has your appearance changed over the

years? _____

Have you voluntarily done anything to change your

appearance? _____

Why did you decide to alter your natural appearance? _____

Appendix C

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions about Personal and Professional Success

1. Can you remember any early experiences of being goal orientated?
2. Please explain and describe some of the experiences that were contributing factors of your success?
3. Describe difficult obstacles or adversity you have had to overcome to reach your current level of success.
4. At what point or age did you choose your current profession?
5. Do you feel as though your appearance has aided in any way to your success?

Questions about Personal Identity and Discrimination

- 1.** Discuss with me any examples of discrimination you have experienced in both your personal life as well as your professional life.
- 2.** Do you believe any of these discriminations were because of your gender?
- 3.** Do you feel as though you have ever been discriminated against because of your appearance? If so please explain.
- 4.** Based on your memories, have these examples of discrimination come more from men or women?
- 5.** Have you experienced stereotyping or profiling by other people?
- 6.** How do you feel about these generalizations? Do you think they are warranted?
- 7.** What are some of the factors that you believe contribute to these generalizations?
- 8.** What are some factors that you believe have contributed to your own perception of your personal identity?

Appendix D

LETTER OF CONSENT

I, _____, (participant) agree to participate in the qualitative study being conducted by Kelly Blackston-Cail (researcher) of Georgia Southern University. I understand that this research is to be used in the researcher's doctoral dissertation as partial fulfillment for her degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum Studies. In this study the researcher will use life experiences of women to explore the various discriminations they may have encountered as a result of their personal identity. I will be asked to share my life experiences and personal interpretations both orally during taped audio interviews as well as those recorded in an autobiographical essay and journal entries. The researcher will take notes during interviews and observations and transcribe the information. Estimates of time required for my participation in this study are approximately 2-4 hours for taped interviews, 2-4 hours observations, and about 1-2 hours for the follow up reading of research analysis. In addition to interviews and observations, I will be asked to keep a journal of my reflective thoughts concerning my interactions with professional colleagues, remembering prior experiences, and examples of various forms of discriminations if any. These journals will be kept in my possession and will be treated in the strictest of confidence once I relinquish them to the researcher. Likewise, observations of my personal and professional practices will held in a protective manner if I choose to participate under a pseudonym. I give my permission for my voice to be recorded. All materials will be held in strict confidence and will be kept in a secure location. I also understand that the audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews and field notes are the property of the researcher and will not

be released to a third party without my written permission. Because this study involves my own interpretations of experiences and events, I will have the opportunity to read and approve the analysis of the data before it is published and to request that particular information not be used in the report if I so choose. I have the right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and consent for participation can be discontinued at any time. My name will not be used in the published report unless I give my written permission. I understand that there is a possibility of minimal risk involved in this study due to the sensitivity of individual recollections and memories that may cause embarrassment, or anxiety. Upon completion of the research project, if I desire a copy, I will receive one.

Use of Actual Name or Pseudonym

____ I give permission for my actual name to be used in the dissertation and publication related to it.

____ I do not give permission for my actual name to be used in the dissertation and publication related to it.

____ I wish to be called by the pseudonym _____.

____ I wish to have the researcher choose a pseudonym for me.

Participant Signature Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature Date

If at any point you have any questions, please contact the researcher, Kelly B. Cail (home-912-355-8052) or (cell 912-844-7165), or my supervising professor, Dr. John Weaver (Georgia Southern University at 912-681-5252). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (912-6815465).

Appendix E

IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
Fax: 912-681-0719	OvrSight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Kelly Blackston-Cail
131 Dutch Island Drive
Savannah, GA 31406

CC: Dr. John Weaver, Faculty Advisor
P. O. Box 8144

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: July 19, 2006

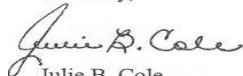
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07002**, and titled "**Issues of Identity: A Narrative Inquiry into the Lives of Women Whose Personal, Professional, and Educational Successes Disprove Common Negative Sterotypes**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs